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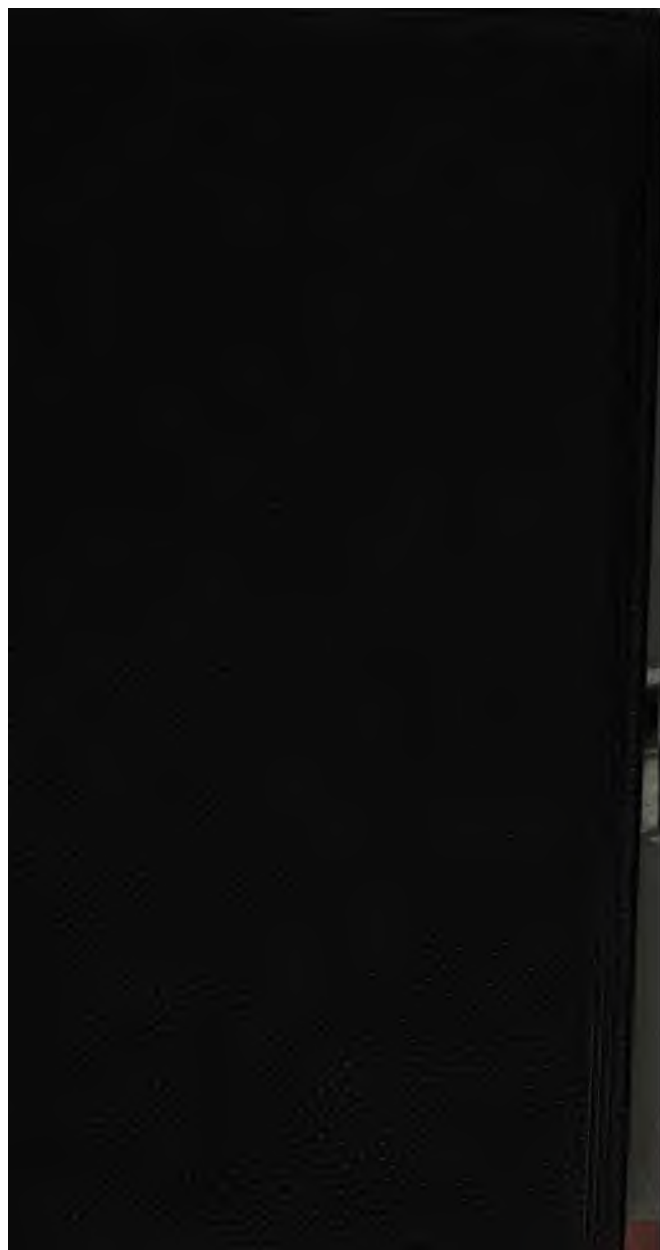
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To *William J. Cuthbert*
from
His affectionate father,
THE *Mr. J. Cuthbert*
CHRISTIAN'S PROSPECT;

OR,

A CURSORY SURVEY

OF

THE REVELATIONS OF SCRIPTURE

RESPECTING

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE RIGHTEOUS IN THE
FUTURE STATE.

~~~~~  
BY ALEXANDER CUTHBERT, A.M.

Minister of the Gospel, Airdrie.  
~~~~~

"Thou wilt show me the path of life."—PSALM xvi. 11.

ABERDEEN :

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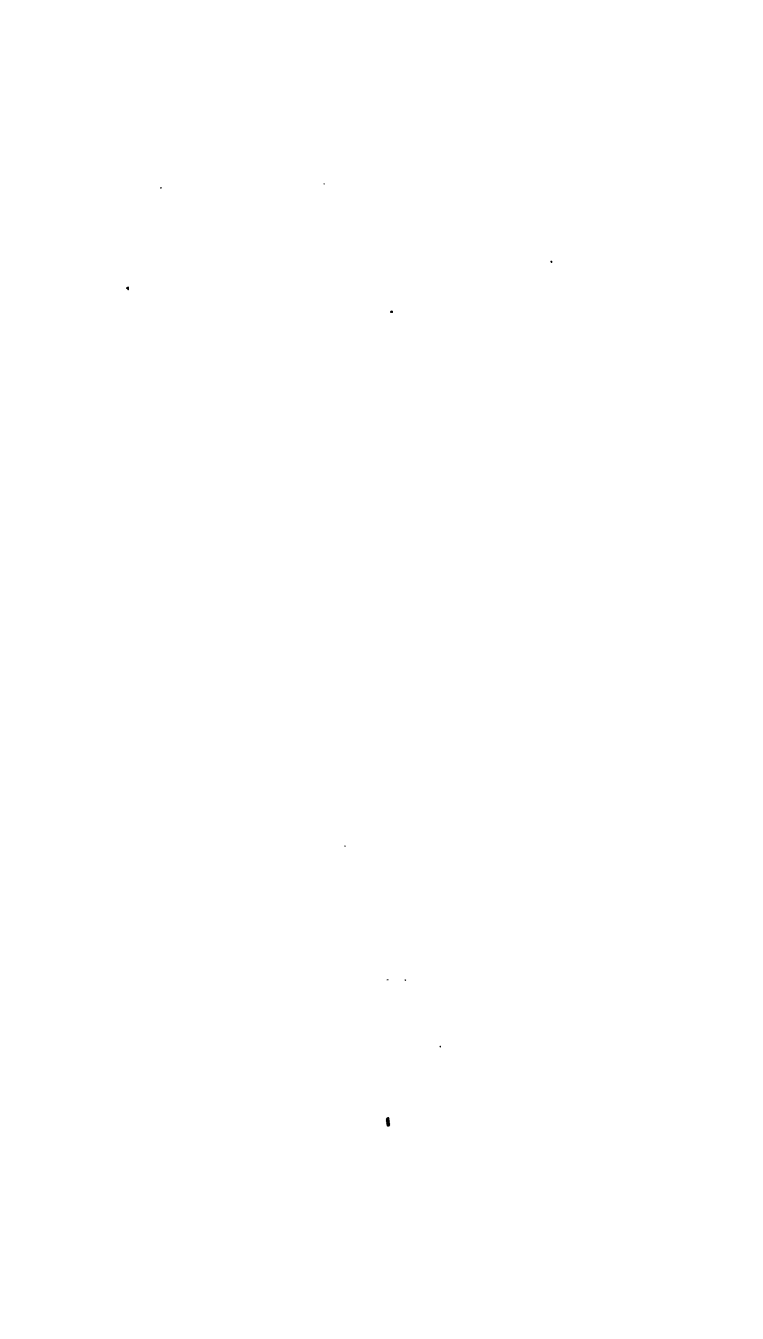
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P R E F A C E .

IN the opinion of the Writer, there are few subjects more interesting to a christian than the one which he has endeavoured to illustrate in the subsequent pages. Although it has been treated by minds of a superior order, he conceives that an attempt—though made by one of humbler pretensions—to bring together the scattered intimations which are contained in the scriptures upon the subject, and to present them in something like a connected form, might assist in the formation of more definite conceptions of the state upon which redeemed men shall enter after they have run their course in this world, and more enlarged views of the pursuits in which they shall engage in the next stage of their existence than those which are still entertained by many christians.

When, what are termed, *the discoveries of modern science* are unsparingly advanced for the purpose of illustrating the subject, the high and holy themes connected with the work of human redemption are in danger of being regarded as matters of secondary importance, or of inferior interest; and a colouring is thrown over the scenes of futurity which, when viewed by unrenewed men, is fitted to make them think that they could, in a very high degree, relish the enjoyments of the future state. And it has been felt that the language which has sometimes been used, condemnatory of the sentiments very generally held by christians, has generated feelings by no means in accordance with the sacredness of the subject; if it has not been laid hold of by some who are imbued by a spirit of scepticism, and made the means of doing more injury to the interests of vital religion than the vague and inadequate conceptions of the subject against which the language in question is directed.

Whilst it must be confessed that there is a tendency—and there is no one who has thought much upon the subject who has not felt it—to go beyond the limits marked out by the “sure word of prophecy,” and to contemplate what can be regarded as nothing better than the mere fantasies of the imagination; the Writer has advanced nothing which did not appear to him, at least, to be founded upon the letter of scripture, or to be fairly deduced from it. And it has been his aim throughout to unfold “what is the mind of the Spirit” respecting the different topics which have been brought under consideration, without, in any instance, forcing a construction upon the language of inspiration which it does not seem naturally to bear.

As all such discussions are useful only in as far as they promote the interests of personal religion, he has devoted a considerable portion of the volume to practical reflections. These, he trusts, will be found to be closely connected with the subject; and he hopes that they will, in some measure, tend to impress more

deeply upon the minds of those who may favour the Work with a perusal, the importance of looking forward to the future scenes of an interminable existence, and the necessity of cultivating, with greater assiduity, the principles and feelings which will fit them for the enjoyment of heavenly felicity. And if it shall be found to be the means of assisting, in any measure, to bring about these results, the object he had in view in writing it will be gained.

AIRDRIE, February 20, 1838.

THE CHRISTIAN'S PROSPECT,

&c. &c.

INTRODUCTION.

It is generally admitted, I believe, that the scriptures are the source from which is derived the surest and most satisfactory information concerning the reality of a future life, and the circumstances connected with it. This admission forms a reason sufficiently strong for confining our attention to the scriptures alone, especially in a treatise upon the subject, designed for the use of those who admit their truth. To inquire whether the knowledge of that life has been communicated to man through any other medium, would necessarily lead to speculations but remotely connected with the subject upon the consideration of which we are about to enter, and would be productive of comparatively little advantage to the generality of readers. Such an inquiry, however ably conducted or however far it might be pursued,

could not discover to us more than the scriptures have revealed, nor render more certain the intimations which they give.

It may not be unworthy of remark, however, that when those who possess the word of God investigate the subject, and profess to avail themselves of no assistance but what nature affords, they speak much more confidently than any heathen ever did; and they seem to imagine that the most satisfactory conclusions can be arrived at independent of the scriptures altogether. This, it will scarcely be believed, arises from their superiority of intellect or greater capability of investigation; for in some of the polished nations of antiquity there were men who studied the subject whose mental powers were of the highest order and who pushed their inquiries as far, perhaps, as it is possible for the human mind to push them, without extraneous assistance. During the long night of pagan darkness which overspread the world they had ample opportunity of examining the soul, and the whole system of nature, yet what they attained to amounted to nothing more than vague conjecture. And even that, there is reason to think, was derived from some primeval revelation, the knowledge of which had not been completely lost, or from some *traditionary* reports conveyed to different portions of

the human family by the descendants of Abraham. The opinions even of the wisest of them are conflicting, and when these opinions are minutely examined and compared, the conviction forces itself upon the mind, that those who formed them were sometimes in the most painful suspense in reference to the reality of another life. The future was shrouded in awful obscurity, and they could not contemplate the hour of dissolution without apprehension and dread.

It is scarcely possible for those who possess the scriptures and believe in the revelations which they make, to place themselves exactly in the circumstances in which the heathen were placed, or to reason upon the subject with feelings similar to those with which the heathen, in ancient times, prosecuted their inquiries. They, in many instances at least, seem to forget, that they are reasoning about a subject regarding which all their doubts have been previously dissipated by unquestionable evidence, derived from a source to which they make no reference, and which they seem anxious to keep entirely out of view. The settled conviction already produced in their minds by that evidence enables them—perhaps without their thinking of it—to give a point to their arguments and to use a style of language which could not have been suggested to the minds of those who had no know-

ledge of the evidence by which that conviction was produced. They are like persons travelling to a distant country, of the existence of which they are fully assured on the testimony of individuals who have been there, and who have given them particular directions respecting the road which leads to it; whereas those who do not possess the scriptures are like persons who travel over the same track in a thick, unbroken night, without any intimation respecting the existence of such a country or any knowledge of the way. Whilst the latter proceed with hesitancy and experience a distressing dubiety about what is before them, the former, in consequence of their previous knowledge, proceed with confidence, and are encouraged by the contemplation of the country at which they expect, in due time, to arrive.

But though it were granted that the reality of a future life could be fully established by a process of reasoning founded upon the constitution of man, the state of society, or from particular facts which are observed in the economy of nature, such a process could determine nothing beyond that point, with any measure of certainty. It could not convey a conception of the circumstances connected with that life, nor of the scenes which are exhibited in the regions *which lie beyond the grave*. The power of reason

cannot draw aside the veil which conceals those regions from human view, nor can the light of nature dissipate the gloom which hangs over them. The scriptures, however, whilst they place the fact beyond all question, go a great way farther. They have "brought life and immortality to light," and afford to the anxious inquirer all the information respecting the subject which he needs. They inform him that there is a place of inconceivable misery to which wicked men are consigned after death, and that there are abodes of light and love prepared for righteous men where they shall enjoy, through eternity, unmingled felicity; they shed a bright radiance over the darkness of the tomb, by directing his mind forward to a period when the bodies which have mingled with the dust shall be reanimated, and that they shall assume forms and be of a nature suited to the character and capacities of the soul; and they tell him of a day at which the destinies of the human race shall be publicly sealed, and the earth with its appendages involved in ruin. This is a species of information both interesting and important, and the source whence it is derived has the first claim on our attention when engaged in any inquiry respecting the future stage of our existence.

But it ought to be remembered, that the revelations which are made respecting these and other collateral subjects are not communicated in a systematic form; they are communicated in brief intimations found here and there in the volume of inspiration. They are to be found in mere hints incidentally given and in allusions occasionally made by the sacred writers; and sometimes they are communicated through the medium of circumstances, without any accompanying remarks to indicate the ulterior design of their having taken place. But although that be the manner in which the Divine Being has seen meet to communicate to men a knowledge of the unseen world, there does not appear to be that measured reserve in the communications he has made respecting it which some seem to think there is. The brief intimations, the scattered hints, and allusions, and circumstances, which are recorded in the scriptures, when carefully examined and compared, shed a flood of light upon it; and they give us impressive views of the awful sufferings which wicked men endure, and convey to our minds the most elevated conceptions of the blessedness which righteous men enjoy. Though I am far from thinking that the revelations which are made respecting the future condition of the former class

are of inferior importance, it is, for reasons which it is unnecessary to mention, to those respecting the state of the latter class to which I propose to confine my attention. And they, I doubt not, will be found to form the more interesting and pleasing part of the subject.



CHAPTER I.

ON THE STATE OF THE SOUL AFTER DEATH.

UPON a subject of this kind it is not surprising that different, and even conflicting opinions should have been formed. This may be accounted for, in some measure at least, by our limited knowledge of the nature of the soul, our absolute ignorance of the mode of its existence when separate from the body, and the language which, in some instances, is employed by the sacred writers respecting its state in the unseen world. Notwithstanding the difficulties with which some consider the subject to be invested, it is not a little remarkable that many of those who, from various causes, are unable to examine it minutely, have, from the simple perusal of the holy scriptures, formed notions respecting it least liable to objection and most strictly in accordance with the desires of our nature. And it is questionable, perhaps, if any one whose opinions are formed exclusively upon the dictates of the word of God and whose mind is unbiassed by the sentiments and authority of others, would ever have imagined, that the souls of men at death sink into a state of torpidity and unconsciousness; and that they shall remain incapable of thought

or of action till their bodies be raised from the grave. This opinion, cheerless and gloomy though it be, is held by many whose belief in the doctrines of scripture, and whose veneration for its authority cannot be questioned. But it cannot well be entertained, one should think, except upon the supposition that the soul is material; that it is but a modification of the substance of which the body is composed; and that its consciousness as well as its capability of thought, and action, and of enjoyment, necessarily depend upon its connexion with a material organization.

Without entering fully into the philosophical argument in support of the immateriality of the soul, I may remark, that our knowledge both of mind and matter is too limited to enable us to speak with certainty about the essence of either. It is limited by the perceptible qualities of the one and those of which we are conscious in the other. We perceive in our bodies qualities similar to those of other matter, and from this circumstance we infer, that they are essentially the same as any other material substance. They have extension and solidity, and are composed of parts, but they are inert and have not the power of originating motion. And we can conceive of no possible modification of the substance of which they are composed which could produce thought or volition, or be rendered susceptible of pleasure or pain. But the other part of the man, the vital, thinking principle, does not possess qualities which bear the

faintest resemblance to these. We are conscious that we feel and think and will and remember, but these qualities are so different from the former as to render it, at least highly probable, that they inhere in a substance essentially different in its nature.

Such being the case it is concluded, that the soul must be immaterial, that it must be one indivisible subsistence, and therefore cannot perish by dissolution, nor its powers of action be suspended in the separate state. But admitting that it is not material, the admission amounts to nothing more than this—that, since the soul is a simple, uncompounded subsistence, it is incapable of being destroyed by dissolution, and that it is capable of existing in the exercise of all its faculties after the body is in the grave. This, however, does not prove that it is immortal nor that it shall live in a state of consciousness and activity when separate from the body; because, whatever be the nature of its essence, its existence and capability of action must depend solely upon the will of the Creator. It requires the constant exertion of his power to sustain it, and were he to will it, even an immaterial being would cease to exist. It could not, it is true, be destroyed by a process similar to the one which the body undergoes at death; but surely the same almighty Being who gave it existence could, in a thousand ways incomprehensible by us, take it away or deprive it of consciousness and suspend its powers of action for any length of time. Any philosophical argument, therefore, on either side of the question

can determine very little, if anything at all, about the state of the soul after death, and would have very little influence upon the minds of the generality of Christians. The matter must be determined by the word of God alone.

But this opinion is not founded exclusively upon anything in the nature of the soul itself, it is alleged that it is countenanced and supported by many parts of the word of God. This puts the subject in a more tangible form and entitles it to a more minute examination.

It cannot be denied that the sacred writers often speak of death as if it were a sleep. The following passages may be taken as examples of this.—“And the Lord said unto Moses, Behold, thou shalt *sleep* with thy fathers.”—“For now shall I *sleep* in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be.”—“So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their *sleep*.”—“Consider and hear me, O Lord my God; lighten mine eyes, lest I *sleep* the *sleep* of death.”—“And many of them that *sleep* in the dust of the earth shall awake.”—“And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which *slept* arose.”—“After that he saith unto them, our friend Lazarus *sleepeth*; but I go, that I may awake him out of *sleep*.”—“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many *sleep*.”—“For if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again,

even so them also which *sleep* in Jesus will God bring with him." *

Sleep, on account of the state in which the body is while under its influence, is a very striking and impressive emblem of death; and one can scarcely imagine that the slightest violence is done to the language of these passages, or that any confusion is introduced into the context by supposing, that the term *sleep* is used by the writers in them all to denote the state of absolute inactivity to which the body is reduced by the stroke of death. That we must understand it in a figurative sense may be shewn by a reference to the case of Lazarus. When the disciples were endeavouring to dissuade the Saviour from going to Bethany, he stated as his reason for going thither, that his friend Lazarus was asleep and that he wished to "awake him out of his sleep." They evidently misapprehended what he meant, for they replied, "Lord, if he *sleep*, he shall do well." They seemed to think that his having fallen asleep—for they understood the word in its ordinary acceptance—indicated, that the violence of the disease had begun to subside, and that a speedy recovery might be expected. The Saviour, however, spake of his death; but when he saw their mistake, "he said unto them *plainly*, Lazarus is *dead*." This explanation

* Deut. xxxi. 16. Job vii. 21.—xiv. 12. Psalm xiii. 3. Dan. xii. 2. Matt. xxvii. 52. John xi. 11. 1 Cor. xi. 30. 1 Thess. iv. 14.

decides the matter, for the term *plainly* which is connected with the expression that indicates the state in which Lazarus was at the time, shews, that the term *sleep* was used figuratively to represent that state. And the reason, perhaps, why the Saviour employed such a mode of speech on that occasion was, to point out to his disciples the pleasing fact that the bodies of his people which were under the power of death should rise to a new life; that they should awake from the slumbers of the tomb on the morning of the resurrection in all the freshness and vigour of immortal youth.

To account more fully for the use of such language by the sacred writers, we have but to recollect that man is a compound being, and that when speaking of the dead they sometimes use expressions respecting the body which they do not intend to apply to the soul. Men cease, at death, to act upon the stage of life and to engage in the pursuits of the world, on that account they are said to sleep although their souls exist in a state of consciousness and activity. Unless we suppose this, it would be impossible to find any legitimate principle of interpretation to explain the numerous passages of scripture in which disembodied souls are spoken of, not only as being in a state of consciousness, but as being capable of the highest enjoyment or the most exquisite suffering. The rich man, for instance, of whom mention is made in the parable, retained, after death, his consciousness, his recollection, and his capability of endurance.

“ In hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.” The beggar, upon the other hand, “ was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom,” and there was “ comforted.” Both were sensible of the circumstances in which they were placed. The one was conscious of enduring the woes of perdition, whilst the other rejoiced in the delights of the celestial paradise. But there is not, in reality, any inconsistency in speaking of the dead at one time as being asleep, and at another as being in possession of a conscious and active existence. In the one case, the language has a reference to the mortal part which is consigned to the tomb and to its insensibility to all earthly things; in the other, it has a reference to the thinking principle which survives the stroke of death and continues to exercise its powers in another sphere of existence.

It is a fact which no one can fail to observe, that when the action of the organs of sensation is entirely suspended in sleep, all the powers of the soul are frequently in exercise. In *dreaming* it is, at times, more active and its operations vastly more rapid than when the body is awake. It is true, it seems then to break loose from the controlling power by which its operations are regulated in ordinary circumstances, and to move in a sphere of its own creation. The material organization in which it is confined, although prostrated by fatigue, and overpowered by sleep, cannot restrain its movements nor confine it to scenes which its own recollections may call up before it; but

as if completely freed from the impediments of a gross materialism, it soars away to regions where it beholds scenes which no waking eyes ever beheld. These aerial flights, however wild and extravagant they may be, prove that it can think and act independent of the body. And to suppose that it sinks into a state of absolute insensibility when the body dies because it is sometimes affirmed of the dead that they are asleep, is as unreasonable as to suppose, that it is incapable of exercising its powers when the organs of sensation are sealed up in repose.

But it is asked—and the question is not an unimportant one—if they possess a conscious existence in the separate state and are capable of thought, and action, and enjoyment, is their destiny fixed immediately after death? Or shall they remain in a state of uncertainty respecting their future condition till the day of judgment? There can be no doubt that many passages of scripture seem to countenance the notion, that the decisions of the Judge respecting the human race will not be declared till the great day; but such is the nature of the case, that a public declaration of his decisions is not necessary to make transgressors feel the weight of his vengeance, or the righteous experience the blessedness arising from the possession of his favour and approbation. The principles which they carry with them into the other world determine the great question at once and for ever, because they are, in a great measure at least, the source of the misery of the wicked and of the happiness of the

righteous both here and hereafter. If, when every prejudice and delusion are completely removed from their minds, their conscience gives forth a decision respecting them in perfect harmony with that of the Judge, how can they, for a moment, be in a state of dubiety about what awaits them at his glorious appearing? or fail to reap the fruit of their doings immediately after they quit the body? Although the rewards of the one class shall not be fully enjoyed, nor the punishment of the other fully inflicted till the resurrection of the body, they enjoy and suffer, in the separate state, to the full extent of their capabilities.

It is not necessary in that case that the solemn and awful formalities of judgment should be proceeded with, nor the final decision of the Judge publicly announced to them when they enter the invisible world, to make them fully acquainted with their state, or to convey to them a notion of the nature and the measure of their rewards and punishments. The characters which they formed upon earth contain the elements of bliss and woe, and the results will be experienced as soon as the soul is called away from this probationary state. Now, if it be asked, what then is the use of the formalities of a general judgment? I answer, to justify and publicly pronounce, in the presence of an assembled world, the decisions which the Judge has already arrived at and begun to carry into execution; and to exhibit, in the most impressive manner, to beings connected with other

worlds the blessedness connected with obedience and the awful effects of transgression.

But there is another opinion held by many wise and good men, which demands our serious attention, I mean the one respecting what is commonly termed *an intermediate state*. It cannot be useless to inquire whether, in reality, there is such a state, or to what extent the opinion seems to be supported by the scriptures. It cannot be a matter of indifference to us whether, during the long interval between death and the resurrection, the souls of the righteous are in a place of rest and security merely, where they are, it is allowed, entirely freed from suffering and all evil, or in the immediate presence of God enjoying the society of angels and the high felicities of heaven. The notion we form of this subject must, in some measure, affect our minds in the prospect of death.

It is well known to every intelligent reader of the scriptures that *hades*—which is almost invariably called *hell* in the new testament—is said to be the place or state into which the soul passes when it leaves the body. The Hebrew word *sheol*, which occurs frequently in the old testament, has precisely the same meaning; for the one is generally rendered by the other in the Greek version of the old testament. Both signify simply, the unseen world, or the invisible state of disembodied souls without any reference to locality, or to suffering or enjoyment. This is evident from the fact, that both terms are employed to indicate the state both of the righteous and the

wicked. Jacob, when he thought that Joseph was torn in pieces, said, "I will go down into *sheol* unto my son mourning;" and the apostle Peter quotes the passage in which the Saviour is represented as saying, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in *hades*, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." On the other hand it is said of the impious king of Babylon, "*sheol* from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming;" and of the rich man mentioned in the parable it is said, "in *hades* he lifted up his eyes being in torments."

It will scarcely be questioned that the place to which Jacob expected to go, and in which the soul of the Saviour really was, must be different from the place where the soul of the king of Babylon and that of the rich man were. And the terms by which they are indicated, as these instances clearly show, are general terms and determine very little, if anything at all, respecting the question. The place to which they are applied is supposed by many to be a subterranean mansion consisting of two great apartments; the one of which is the residence of the souls of good men and is called *paradise*, the other being the place where the souls of the wicked are confined in chains of darkness till the judgment of the great day.

"Assuming, therefore,"—says Bishop Horsley, in his sermon on the descent of Christ into hell—"Assuming, therefore, that every departed soul has its place of residence, it would be unreasonable to suppose, if revelation were silent upon the subject



that a common mansion is provided for them all, their nature being similar; since we see throughout all nature creatures of the same sort placed together in the same element. But revelation is not silent. The sacred writers of the old testament speak of such a common mansion in the inner parts of the earth; and we find the same opinion so general among the heathen writers of antiquity, that it is more probable that it had its rise in the earliest patriarchal revelations than in the imaginations of man, or in poetical fiction. The notion is confirmed by the language of the writers of the new testament, with this additional circumstance, that they divide the central mansion of the dead into two distinct regions, for the separate lodging of the souls of the righteous and the reprobate." Concerning the nature of that place, he further says:—"The invisible mansion of departed spirits, though certainly not a place of penal confinement to the good, is nevertheless, in some respects, a prison. It is a place of seclusion from the external world—a place of unfinished happiness, consisting in rest, security, and hope, more than enjoyment." As there is not in the above representation a reference to any particular passage, it is of importance that we should endeavour to ascertain how it agrees with the general statements of scripture upon the subject. If it can be shown that *paradise* is not a "central mansion in the inner parts of the earth"—a place, certainly, not very likely to be the residence of blessed souls—we may, perhaps, see that there is reason to form a conception of the

state of disembodied souls, somewhat more elevated than such a representation would lead us to form.

The word *paradise* signifies *a garden of pleasure*, and is the name which is frequently given, by way of eminence, to the place where our first parents resided before the fall. Dr. Adam Clark observes, that "*the Garden of Eden* mentioned Gen. ii. 8. is also called in the Septuagint the garden of Paradise. Hence the word has been translated into the new testament, and is used to signify a place of exquisite delight. The word Paradise is not Greek, but of Arabic origin. In Arabic and Persian, it signifies a *garden, a vineyard, the place of the blessed.*" This definition of the term is in perfect harmony with all that is said about the place in the holy scriptures; and the circumstances in which it is mentioned, favour the notion that it is a synonyme for heaven, the place where the throne of the Eternal is fixed. This opinion, I conceive, is strongly supported by the account which Paul gives of his "visions and revelations." In the twelfth chapter of his second epistle to the Corinthians, he says, at the second verse, "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter."

It is supposed by some, I am aware, that the apostle speaks, in this place, of two "visions" or "revelations;" but the evidence on which this notion is founded is exceedingly dubious and slender. It will not escape the observation of the intelligent reader that he mentions but one period of time—"fourteen years"—that he does not add a single word about what he saw or heard till he reiterated the fact of his having been "caught up;" and that the language he employs to describe his feelings is the same in both cases. These circumstances go a great way to show that he had but one *revelation*. That he should have reiterated the fact is certainly no unnatural or unaccountable thing, when the nature of the case is considered. It is so unlike anything that ever occurred in the experience of any other person, that he seems to have thought a repetition necessary to evince his sincerity, and to make a deeper impression upon the minds of those to whom he wrote, respecting the truth of what he stated. These considerations seem, to me at least, to render it in the highest degree probable, that the narrative contains an account of but one event. If this be the case, there cannot be a doubt that the place he calls "paradise" in the fourth verse is the one which, in the second verse, he denominates "the third heaven." That place, in the opinion of the Jews, was the special residence of the Deity. The aerial regions immediately surrounding the earth, they called the *first heaven*; the firmament, or space in which sun, moon, and stars, perform their revolu-

tions, they denominated *the second heaven*; but *the third heaven*, or, as it is elsewhere called in scripture, *the heaven of heavens*, they considered to be the particular locality where, in a special manner, the glory of the divine Majesty is displayed, and where angels and principalities and powers are.

This view of the matter is confirmed by a comparison of different passages in the book of the Revelation. In the second chapter at the seventh verse, it is said, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." This appears to be the same place which John describes in the beginning of the twenty-second chapter. "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him." It will scarcely be questioned that "the paradise of God" is the same place which Paul mentions, for it is represented as being the residence of "him that overcometh," the place where he enjoys the fruits of his conquest after his earthly conflict is at an end. Now, since "the tree of life" is said to grow "on either side of the river" which "proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb," and is also said

to be "in the midst of the paradise of God," the plain inference is, that "paradise" and the mansion of light and glory where "the throne of God and of the Lamb is situated are one and the same place."

That this is the place where the souls of the righteous go immediately after death, appears from the language of the Saviour to the penitent thief who was crucified along with him. He said to him immediately before he expired, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." It would be difficult, I conceive, to assign anything like a satisfactory reason why we should not consider the "paradise" of which the Saviour here speaks, and where his human soul was during the time his body lay in the tomb, to be the "paradise" or "third heaven" to which Paul was "caught up;" to be "the paradise of God"—the residence of the Most High, the habitation of his holiness. If these be but different modes of phraseology applied to one and the same place—and the concurrent testimony of scripture seems to warrant the conclusion that they are so—how unlike must the abode of righteous souls in the invisible world be, to the "common mansion in the inner parts of the earth" of which some speak, the place "in some respects a prison" where they suppose the spirits of the just now reside!

Against the conclusion to which these remarks have led us, it is alleged, that since the notion of a descent is frequently connected with going into hades or the invisible mansion of departed spirits, the souls of men

which have left this world must be in some region beneath the surface of the earth. This opinion is founded, partly at least, upon the language of Paul respecting the Saviour. He says, in the fourth chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians,—“ When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that he ascended what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth.” This, one should think, is but precarious ground on which to rest such an opinion. The phrase, “ the lower parts of the earth” seems to be a periphrasis for the *grave*, and cannot, with propriety, be considered to signify anything else than the place where the dead body of the Saviour was laid after he was crucified. The language has this meaning in other parts of Scripture. For example,—“ But those that seek my soul, to destroy it, shall go into the lower parts of the earth”—“ For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly ; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” The reason why the souls of men are said to descend when they enter into another state of existence is obvious. “ Observing that after death the body returned to the earth, and that it was deposited in a sepulchre after the manner which has just been described, a sort of popular notion prevailed among the Hebrews as well as among other nations, that the life which succeeded the present was to be passed *beneath the earth*, and to this notion even the sacred prophets were obliged to allude occasionally,

if they wished to be understood by the people on this subject." * The same language then which described what takes place with respect to the body after death, came, by a very natural and easy process, to be employed in reference to the soul when it quits its earthly habitation. It, therefore, can determine nothing respecting either the nature or the locality of the invisible mansion of departed spirits.

But there is another passage in the first epistle of Peter which is supposed by many to place the correctness of the notion beyond a doubt. I mean the one in which he says of the Saviour, that he was "put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison." This "prison," of course, is understood to be the habitation of disembodied souls, and to be the place to which the soul of the Saviour went immediately after he expired upon the cross, and where it continued till his body was reanimated on the third day. The design of his going there, it is affirmed by Bishop Horsley, in the sermon from which I have already quoted, was, "to proclaim the glad tidings, that he had actually offered the sacrifice for their redemption, and was about to appear before the Father as their intercessor, in the merit of his own blood." These "spirits in prison," according to this notion, can be none other than the departed souls of the righteous, because to none else could the

* Lowth, on Heb. Poet. vol. 1. page 163.

preaching of Christ be addressed—pardon never being offered to the wicked after death, nor intercession made for them by the Saviour. But if the term “prison” can, with propriety, be applied to the place where the disembodied souls of the saints are, and where they shall remain till the resurrection, our conceptions of their blessedness cannot be very exalted—the idea of a prison being always associated in the mind with that of privation and suffering, if not with penal infliction. The language, in truth, seems to have no reference at all to the state of departed souls in the invisible world, it is susceptible of a much more rational interpretation.

“The spirits in prison” are those “which sometime were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was a preparing.” This explanatory clause removes all dubiety from the language, and shows that the persons of whom the apostle speaks are those who lived before the deluge, and to whom Noah preached. It is true, it is said that it was the Saviour himself who “went and preached” to them, when, in reality, it was Noah who did so. But this is not an uncommon mode of expression, for the apostle Paul, when describing to the Ephesians the blessings which they enjoyed through his mediation, says of him that he “came and preached peace to them which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.” This he certainly did not do in his own person, as the gospel was not preached to the gentiles till after his ascension to heaven. Now,

if it is said that he preached to the gentiles when he did so only by his apostles, may it not with equal propriety be said that he preached to the antediluvians when he did so by a person whom he inspired by his Spirit for that purpose? Noah is elsewhere called "a preacher of righteousness;" and doubtless while he sustained that character he was under the influence of "the Spirit of Christ." The spirits of those who rejected his testimony and continued "disobedient" are now "in prison," because, like the fallen angels, they are kept in confinement till the judgment of the great day. Such being the plain and obvious import of the language, it determines nothing concerning the disembodied spirits of the righteous. Indeed, it is unreasonable to suppose that the soul of the Saviour, after he endured the penal inflictions of divine justice, and exclaimed upon the cross, "it is finished," should be consigned to a place of seclusion from the immediate presence of God; and, if *his* soul was not in such a place while his body was in the grave, there is no reason to conclude that the disembodied souls of his people are so. To imagine that they are shut up in a place of confinement, there to be detained till the second and glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, would fill the mind with gloomy apprehensions, or at least would neutralize, in some measure, the feelings of comfort and joy which the righteous are warranted to cherish in the prospect of dissolution. This passage, then, being opposed neither in spirit nor in language to the sentiment I have been

illustrating, we are warranted to think of the departed spirits of the righteous as dwelling in the special residence of the Great Eternal, associated with the angelic beings who wait around his seat. In that place they have not simply some transient glimpses of his glory, they enjoy its full manifestation, and are permitted constantly to gaze upon its highest splendours.

Unless we take this view of the subject, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to account for the feelings expressed by some of the servants of God in reference to the happiness they anticipated in the disembodied state. "Therefore," says the apostle Paul, "we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." The sacred writer, in this language, evidently contrasts the circumstances of the soul while in the present world with those in which it is placed in the disembodied state. The body, which is elsewhere called a tabernacle or tent, is the place of its present residence, and while it dwells therein it is in a state of exile, shut out from the immediate presence of the exalted Redeemer; and prevented, in consequence of its vision being obscured by the veil of mortality, from beholding the inconceivable glories of the world on high. But, when by the stroke of death it is dismissed from its present habitation, it wings its flight to the place where the throne of God is situated, and



where the glorified body of the Saviour is. The phrase, "to be present with the Lord," can mean nothing short of this, because, if it could be used with respect to the departed spirits of the righteous if they are in some place where the glorified humanity of the Saviour is not, where the full splendours of his majesty are not displayed, it might with as much propriety be used respecting them in the present world, while imprisoned in a tenement of clay. In either case it could be used only because he pervades the regions of immensity, and because there is no locality in the boundless universe in which a holy creature would not experience the sustaining and cheering influence of his presence. On no other supposition, indeed, than the one I have made, could there be any propriety in saying, "whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord." In this world christians are not so far exiled as to be deprived of the happiness resulting from a sense of the presence of their Lord, they are absent from him only as it respects his glorified human nature. To be present with him, then, is to be, not only where his presence is enjoyed, it is to be in the place where his throne is situated, where he fully manifests his glory, and where the hosts of angelic spirits have their habitation. And this is the reason, I apprehend, of the apostle's willingness "rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

On what other supposition can we account for the expressions he employs in another part of his writ-

ings? "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better." It is impossible, perhaps, for language to convey more forcibly to our minds a notion of the conflict which agitated the apostle's breast when endeavouring to fix his choice respecting life or death. There seems to be in it an allusion to the situation of a ship riding at anchor, but likely to break loose from its moorings and to be driven out to sea. So he, however strong the attachments were which bound him to the present world, and which made him willing to endure afflictions and storms of persecution, vehemently desired to be unloosed from them all, and to bear away to the heavenly country. This desire was produced by the conception of the immense accession which should be made to his happiness when he reached that place. So elevated, indeed, were his conceptions of that happiness, that he labours for language in which to give expression to them. Had he imagined that the souls of the righteous, when they quit the body, pass into a state in which their powers of action and their capabilities of enjoyment are suspended, or that they are conveyed to a place "in some respects a prison"—"a place of unfinished happiness, consisting in rest, security, and hope, more than enjoyment," and where they do not behold the full manifestation of the Saviour's glory, would he have expressed such a vehe-

ment desire to leave the scene of his labours, where he could actively glorify his divine master, and promote the spiritual interests of the human race? The thing is improbable in the highest degree. "To depart, and to be with Christ," he considered to be *πολλὰ μᾶλλον κρείσσον*—*better beyond all expression*. This is the highest superlative which it is possible to form in any language, and the use of it here by the apostle proves that he expected immediately after death, not only to rest from his labours, and to be completely exempted from the anxieties, privations, and sufferings which he endured in the present life, he expected to be introduced into the immediate presence of the glorified Redeemer, there to enjoy happiness of which it is impossible for human language to convey an adequate conception.

This view of these passages is in perfect harmony with the language which is elsewhere used respecting the disembodied souls of the righteous. In the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, it is said:—"Ye are come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are enrolled in heaven, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." The paragraph of which these words form a part, contains a description of the state of God's people in the future world, and the privileges they are honoured to enjoy in this. When they believe the gospel, they are brought into a close connection with the heavenly world, and are permitted to hold communion with "God the judge of all,"

with "Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant," with "an innumerable company of angels" who inhabit "the heavenly Jerusalem," with the "church of the first-born which are enrolled in heaven," and with "the spirits of just men made perfect." The class last-mentioned in this enumeration forms part of the society into whose communion believers are admitted, and it consists of those who, in every age, have died in the faith of the gospel. What is affirmed respecting them, cannot, surely, be understood of what they shall be after the second coming of Christ, but of what they are now in the separate state; because, when their bodies are raised from the grave, the term *spirits* could not, with propriety, be applied to them. In the disembodied state they are "made perfect," not simply because every stain of moral pollution is washed away, nor because they are entirely exempt from misery and suffering, but because, in addition to these, they enjoy the highest degree of felicity they are capable of enjoying in that state. No doubt their happiness will be augmented at the resurrection; but, unless we suppose that, even in the disembodied state, all the powers of their minds are in constant and delightful exercise upon objects suited to their nature, and their enlarged capacities filled with the overflowings of divine love, as it is poured forth in the celestial world, how can it be said that they are made perfect?

This subject is set in a somewhat clearer light by one or two passages in the book of the Revelation.

The apostle John, in the description which he gives of the interior of heaven, mentions "a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, which stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands." And in another vision he saw "a Lamb which stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And they sung as it were a new song before the throne."* The whole book of the Revelation, it is readily admitted, is a highly figurative one. It would be injudicious, therefore, as well as unsafe, to put a construction upon its mystic visions inconsistent with the principle of interpretation which must be applied generally to the book. Still, there are some of its visions of such a nature, that no doubt can be reasonably entertained respecting the things they are designed to reveal. Those which are described in the passages I have quoted evidently belong to this class. Their meaning can scarcely be misunderstood. The scenes they disclose are not exhibitions of future events, they are symbolical representations of an existing state of things in heaven, and clearly unfold the condition in which the departed souls of the righteous *now* are. Their being with the "Lamb on mount Zion," their being "clothed in white robes" and having "palms in their

* Chapter vii. 9.—xiv. 1, 3.

hands," and their being "before the throne" engaged in singing "a new song," can indicate nothing else than that they are in the celestial temple, in the immediate presence of God. If this is not the truth set forth by these visions, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to attach a meaning to them at all. There must be a correspondence betwixt the symbols employed in the description of a scene, and the things they are designed to represent, or else there can be no kind of notion of it conveyed to the mind. Now, what meaning consistent with the nature of the symbolic representation in the visions, can we fix upon, but the one I have stated? Indeed, whether we understand the language in which they are related literally or figuratively, the passages illustrate and confirm the fact, that "the souls of the righteous do at death immediately pass into glory," to enjoy the pleasures which are at God's right hand.

Death, considered as a separation of the soul from the body, is invested with all that is repugnant to the feelings of our nature, and considered as an expression of the divine displeasure against sin, it is an object of dread. But when it is viewed through the medium of faith in the atonement of Christ, it assumes a different aspect, and may be regarded as a deliverer who comes to emancipate the soul from its earthly prison-house. And, O! how delightful is the thought, that the stroke which separates the righteous from the fellowship of Christians upon earth, is the means of introducing them to the immediate fellowship of

“ the general assembly and church of the first-born in heaven ;” and that, as soon as their eyes close upon the visible glories of this lower world, they behold the splendours of eternity, and see the Redeemer’s face in righteousness ! How they perceive the grandeur and magnificence of heaven without the instrumentality of corporeal organs, through what medium they hold intercourse with each other, or in what manner they act and think and enjoy the blessedness which springs from being in the unveiled presence of the Holy One, are matters of which we are altogether ignorant. God has not seen meet to make any revelation to us respecting them. In that case it is vain to speculate.

It will, however, be readily admitted by almost all, that souls, when separate from the body, can not only act, but are capable of enjoying a degree of pleasure inconceivably higher than that of which they are capable in the present world. But although that were not the case : although some kind of material vehicle was requisite to enable them to perceive external objects and hold intercourse with other beings around them, few will go so far as to assert that such vehicles may not be prepared for them by the Creator as soon as they enter the invisible world, if they are indispensable to their happiness. But the probability is—and the concurrent testimony of scripture respecting the state of departed spirits seems to countenance the opinion—that they perceive and act without the *assistance of any thing of the kind.*

It is not necessary that I should, at present, enter upon the consideration of the happiness which they enjoy, that will be done with more propriety afterwards, it is enough to state that they are entirely free from sin, and sorrow, and suffering; that they enjoy, to the full extent of their capabilities, the pleasures which are at God's right hand; and that they are engaged along with angels in the services of heaven. But it is sometimes asked—and the questions, surely, are neither useless nor unreasonable—Do they still feel an interest in this lower world? or have they any means of becoming acquainted with what is taking place in it? These are interesting inquiries, and, perhaps, something more than mere conjecture may be stated in reply to them.

There is nothing more certain than that their individual consciousness, and the recollection of the actions they performed during their earthly existence, go along with them into another world. Were this not the case; were the consciousness that they are the same moral agents who lived and acted in this world not preserved, and the remembrance of the deeds they had done in the body utterly effaced from their memory, their personal identity would be destroyed, and the end to be answered by the decisions of the great day entirely frustrated. The scenes through which they passed in their sublunary existence, the pursuits in which they engaged, and the persons with whom they associated, are still vivid in their recollections; and these events, and pursuits,

and persons, being all connected with the scheme of providence, the contemplation of which now fills them with joy, are invested with an interest which they cannot cease to feel even when engaged in the higher pursuits of the heavenly state. Can we suppose that the interest they took in the salvation of sinners, and the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, ceases to be felt by them when they enter the invisible world? or that the eternal welfare of the relatives and friends they have left behind is a matter about which they have no concern? Before we can make such a supposition, we must believe that all the circumstances connected with their earthly existence have faded from their memory like a dream of the night. This consideration shows it to be at least highly probable, that the departed spirits of the righteous still feel an intense interest in many of the events which are taking place in our world, and are marking, with holy satisfaction, the triumphs of that kingdom over which the Saviour in a special manner rules.

The communication which is constantly kept up between the earth and the abodes of the blest affords them abundant means of becoming acquainted with what is taking place in the sphere of their former existence. Multitudes are every hour entering the invisible world from every part of the earth, and, doubtless, carry intelligence to those who have gone before them. And, surely, it is no extravagant notion to imagine that the felicity of the parent is augmented *when a kindred spirit, acquainted with the history of*

his family, enters heaven and communicates the joyful tidings that the children whom he left behind are walking in the fear of God and are valiant for the truth upon the earth? that the devoted minister of Jesus who, during a protracted period, laboured, apparently at least, almost in vain, experiences emotions of inexpressible delight when he hears that the precious seed he sowed in tears has sprung up, and is bringing forth fruit to life eternal? and that the founders of our missionary institutions, who, in the day of small things, struggled against the most formidable obstacles, feel a high and holy satisfaction when the trophies of the missionary enterprise appear among the ransomed multitude on high, to tell what these institutions have, by the blessing of the exalted Redeemer, been honoured to effect? These are things which cannot fail to produce the deepest interest even in heaven; and such intelligence, being daily and hourly borne thither, will make the disembodied souls of the righteous renew their retrospections of an antecedent existence with a stronger zest, and cherish with deeper feeling the recollection of sublunary scenes which were intimately connected with the glory they now inherit.

But this is not the only means they possess of knowing the transactions of this lower world. It will scarcely be questioned that the angelic beings with whom they are associated, are acquainted with the history of man, and feel a deep interest in the events which are taking place upon earth. We are informed

that when the foundations of the earth were fastened, and the corner stone thereof laid, " the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Their pure and benevolent minds were filled with delight when they saw another province added to the empire of the Most High, designed to be the abode of creatures whose happiness should spring from the same source as their own. Although inferior to angels in the scale of intelligence, the principles of holiness which pervaded the mind of man in a state of innocence formed a bond of relationship betwixt them, and effectually called forth the sympathies of these angelic beings. And though the commission of sin dissolved the bonds which united heaven and earth, it was the occasion of displays of the divine character being made which they contemplate with delight, and has generated in their minds towards the human race, feelings to which they were formerly strangers. Being placed under a dispensation of mercy, and in circumstances in which they may be saved from the consequences of the fall, these holy creatures view with pleasure the manifestations of divine grace in the place where the blighting influence of the curse is felt. " There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." And there is no reason to doubt, that, for some important ends, they perpetually hover about the abodes of men ; and, when one of them conveys the intelligence to the upper world that a descendant of Adam *is become* an heir of glory, an emotion of ecstatic

delight is produced in the minds of its inhabitants. And can we imagine, when such tidings are conveyed to heaven, that "the spirits of just men made perfect" are the only beings who feel no interest in it, and experience no joy at such an event? Is it not more likely that they, of all the multitudes that surround the throne, are most eager to hear the tidings, and to inquire in what place, by what instrumentality, and in what circumstances the individual was brought to repentance? To suppose that the messenger who carries the intelligence is unacquainted with these particulars, is inconsistent with any correct view which we can take of their powers and capabilities, or the services in which they are employed.

Besides, they are "all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." Their assistance has often been received in seasons of difficulty and distress. One of them brought food to Elijah in the wilderness when he was faint and weary; one of them shut the mouths of the lions among which Daniel was cast; one of them strengthened the Saviour after he was agonized in the garden of Gethsemane; one of them opened the doors of the prison into which the apostles were thrust by the Jewish high priest; one of them released Peter when he was about to fall a prey to the cruelty of Herod; and one of them appeared to Paul, and comforted him when he was tossed upon the stormy deep. These, and many other instances of a similar nature mentioned in the scriptures, show in what a variety of

ways these spirits minister to the heirs of salvation. But before they can render such services to them they must be intimately acquainted with the circumstances in which they are placed. They follow them through all the windings of their pilgrimage to defend them from the assaults of enemies, to guide them through the snares which lie in their path, to supply their wants, to strengthen them when they are weak, and to cheer them when they are sorrowful and dejected. And, surely, when these angelic beings can wing their flight from world to world with a speed of which we, perhaps, can form no conception, and having access at all times to the habitation of the Eternal, it is no mere fancy to suppose, that they frequently mingle with the multitude of redeemed sinners around the throne, and tell them of the joys and sorrows of their brethren who are still upon the earth. Such channels of communication being always open, I see no reason to doubt that the disembodied souls of the righteous possess a more accurate and enlarged acquaintance with the state of the church below than those who are still in the body.

But there is also some reason to think, that they are permitted occasionally to visit this lower world. A belief very generally prevailed among the Jews that the disembodied souls of good men were employed to minister to the church upon earth ; but whether it was founded upon some tradition, or upon a primeval revelation, it is difficult to determine. The new testament, however, furnishes some facts in accordance

with that belief. We are informed that Moses and Elijah appeared with our Saviour upon the mountain at his transfiguration; and the apostle John, while receiving the intimations contained in the book of the Revelation, conversed with one, if not more, who were once inhabitants of this world. On two occasions he fell down to worship the being who showed him the things which should come to pass. On one of these occasions it was said to him, "See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus." And on the other occasion it was said, "See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book."* Whether or not this is the language of different beings is a matter of very little consequence; for, although it was the same being who addressed him in both instances, it affords a proof of the fact, sufficiently strong, that a mission from the heavenly world of the highest importance to the church of Christ, was intrusted to the care of one of the human race. And since the Almighty saw fit to employ beings who were once inhabitants of the earth in such important transactions as the transfiguration of Christ, and giving an emblematical representation of the fortunes of the church till the end of time, it is by no means unreasonable to conclude that the disembodied souls of the righteous are often dispatched from on high to

* Rev. xix. 10.—xxii. 9.

the sphere of their former existence, to witness the triumphs of the gospel, or to succour their brethren who are still engaged in the conflict. If such be the case—and there is at least some ground for believing that it is so—then are we permitted to cherish the pleasing thought, that the spirits of our departed Christian friends are frequently near us, performing offices of kindness and love. To be employed to minister to those in whom they feel a deep and lasting interest, and for whom they often wept and prayed while they were upon the earth, must be a source of inconceivable pleasure, and add warmth to the love which they feel to the Saviour.

It is, however, supposed by not a few, that if the departed spirits of the righteous possessed such an acquaintance with the state of things in this world, it would, in a great measure, neutralize their happiness, because it is not likely they could be ignorant of the impenitence of many who were dear to them, and of their being, at death, consigned to the place of punishment. The knowledge of their circumstances, they imagine, would produce emotions of the most painful nature, and prevent them from enjoying the felicities of heaven. This objection to the doctrine which I have endeavoured to illustrate, is evidently founded upon a partial view of the subject.

It will not, I presume, be questioned by any one, that all the redeemed shall witness the procedure of the Judge at the day of retribution, that they shall hear him pronounce the doom of the finally impeni-

tent, and see him frown them from his presence into everlasting destruction. They cannot be ignorant that the culprits who tremble before his seat form part of the human race, and are the very men with whom they lived and conversed in this world. And if, as we are taught to believe, there will be a scrutiny made into the conduct of each one of them, and a measure of punishment awarded corresponding to the nature, and number, and aggravation of their crimes, individuals will be singled out whose history is known, perhaps, to almost all the company of the saved, and will be the marks against which the hottest thunderbolts of the Almighty will be launched. That being the case, their character and circumstances must be known to some relatives and friends who shall be upon the right hand of the Judge, and who shall add their solemn amen to the fearful sentence pronounced upon them. But there is no reason to think that the discoveries which shall then be made with respect to the individual characters of the wicked, will neutralize the feelings of inexpressible delight which will be experienced by the redeemed when they hear the Saviour say to them, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." If, then, from the proceedings of the judgment-day, the righteous must become acquainted with the condition of their friends who are under condemnation, and that knowledge have no tendency to produce one painful emotion in their breasts, it is difficult to conceive how the disembodied

souls now in the presence of God, can be distressed by knowing of the miseries or wickedness of friends who are still upon the earth.

Besides, if they are destitute of the knowledge in question, they must be altogether uncertain whether their friends whom they loved upon earth are among the number of the redeemed. As the recollection of the interest they felt in them is not destroyed by death, but is vivid in their memory in the invisible world, would an utter uncertainty respecting their eternal condition be productive of feelings less painful than would the knowledge I have supposed them to possess? Certainly not. Experience proves that uncertainty is one of the most distressing states in which any person can be, and is as unfavourable to happiness as the knowledge of an apprehended evil. The truth seems to be, that the redeemed in heaven have such an abhorrence of sin, such a love of holiness, and such a strong conviction of the rectitude of the procedure of the Most High, as not only to make them acquiesce in his decisions, but to view with rapture the good which will result to the universe from the everlasting punishment of the wicked. And although many relatives and friends for whose salvation they longed and prayed, shall be found among that class, they will be so transported with the love of God and the contemplation of his character, that they will look upon him as their best friend, and enter fully into his views respecting the despisers of his grace. Their views of sin and sinners will correspond with his, and

will effectually neutralize all the feelings which some suppose would be produced by contemplating the woes and sufferings of those with whom they were connected in a former state of existence.

This view of the matter seems to agree with the representation which is given of it by the Saviour in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The parable it may be requisite to quote at length :—
“ There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day : and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table : moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom : the rich man also died, and was buried, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue ; for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things : but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed : so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot ; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray

thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house : for I have five brethren ; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets ; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham : but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead."

It is true the circumstances of these two individuals in the invisible world are described in parabolical language, but it is equally true that " the essential or fundamental parts of a Scripture parable never embody any ideas which are opposed to truth, otherwise it would be fitted to mislead us." The rich man is represented as not only recognising Abraham and Lazarus in the invisible mansions of departed spirits, but as being intimately acquainted with the character and circumstances of his five brethren who were still upon the earth. And imagining that the patriarch could mitigate his sufferings, or send a spirit from the other world to convince his impenitent brethren whom he had left behind, and who were in eminent hazard of being consigned to the place of punishment, he earnestly entreated him to interpose. But Abraham, without the slightest emotion, or uttering a single expression which indicated that his mind was perturbed by contemplating the misery of the rich man or the callousness and unbelief of his brethren,

calmly reasoned with him about the folly of neglecting the concerns of his soul while he was in this world, and about the utter uselessness of any miraculous interposition for the purpose of removing the impenitence of his brethren. With such a scene full in his view, his joys were unmingled, and the facts which it brought to his mind had no effect in producing feelings of a painful or a distressing nature.

These considerations will in some measure, if not completely, obviate the objection alluded to ; and also show that many of the emotions which agitate the minds of good men in this world, cease to be felt by them when they pass into another and higher sphere of existence. The disembodied souls of the righteous, from the elevated position they occupy, can take a vastly more extended survey of the dispensations and government of the Most High than they were capable of doing before they ascended to the regions of immortality ; and they can view the movements of individuals, as well as the progress of events in general, through a different medium than that through which they viewed them while clothed with flesh and blood. The dissolution of their visible connexion with sublunary scenes and human things, greatly modifies their sympathies and feelings ; and though the traces of them are not effaced from their memory by the stroke of death, nor the interest they felt in what is really important, in the least degree diminished ; and though the knowledge of what is still taking place, particularly of what relates to the kingdom of

Christ, is conveyed to them through various channels, they contemplate the whole with unruffled composure, being fully satisfied that all is under the control of the Great Supreme, and will be brought, by his wisdom and power, to an issue that will call forth the wonder and the grateful praises of the universe.

CHAPTER II.

ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

WHETHER the soul, after it is dislodged from the body, shall, at some future period, be invested with a material organization, or whether such a thing be necessary for the perfecting of human nature in the next stage of our existence, are questions to which unassisted reason can give no reply. But though it were to place the matter beyond all doubt, it could not determine whether the future corporeal structure shall be formed out of the body, which was the instrument of the soul in this world; or, in other words, whether the body which is laid in the grave shall be raised to life again.

The appearances which the human frame assumes, and the state into which it goes shortly after life is extinct, prevent any one from supposing—if he had no other means of arriving at a knowledge of the fact—that it contains within itself the elements of another organization fitted for a different and higher mode of being. It seems, when consigned to the dust, to be lost for ever, and its reanimation to be an impossibility. Hence, the greatest, and wisest, and most enlightened men who lived in the heathen world in

ancient times, seem not to have hazarded even a conjecture about the probability of such a thing. Or, perhaps, they considered it useless to speculate upon the subject, from a notion which, to some extent at least, was entertained, that it is not desirable that the soul should be invested with a corporeal frame, because, instead of assisting it in its operations and increasing its happiness, it would be a mere cumbrous appendage which would prevent it from arriving at a state of perfection suited to its nature and capabilities. Although they had considered the reanimation of the body to be within the limits of possibility, this opinion, originating no doubt in false conceptions or utter ignorance of the mode of existence to which man is destined, was sufficient to disincline them from thinking about the body as a part of the man at all, after it is laid in the tomb. It seems, however, to have been more generally imagined that it is impossible.

So fully, indeed, were many of them confirmed in this belief, that when the doctrine of the resurrection was first propounded in some parts of the heathen world, it was listened to with contempt and derision as a dogma unworthy of a moment's consideration. This was the case at Athens. When Paul "preached Jesus, and the resurrection" there, some who heard him considered him to be a mere "babbler" who spoke about a thing of which they could form no conception; whilst others imagined that the *αναστασις*—*that is the resurrection*—was some "strange god"

whose claims upon their homage he was endeavouring to set forth. Such feelings and sentiments expressed respecting "this new doctrine" in that seat of learning—and expressed, it is likely, by those who were acquainted with all that was known in the heathen world respecting another life—it is not too much to infer, that it formed no part of the popular belief; and that it was, in the estimation of the most enlightened, absolutely "incredible." This remarkable incident would almost lead us to imagine, that the matter had never been thought of by them; or at all events, that if it had come within the range of their contemplations, it was not for the purpose of forming any conjecture respecting its probability, but as a thing beset with such difficulties as to exclude any ray of hope about its taking place, even if it were desirable. It seemed to be so far remote from their apprehension, as to render it improbable in the highest degree, that it ever would have been discovered had it not been made known by a revelation from heaven.

It is readily admitted, that no one who possesses such a knowledge of the attributes of God as may be derived from the scriptures, will consider it "a thing incredible that God should raise the dead." But when the belief of his existence is not fully settled in the mind, and no means is enjoyed of acquiring a knowledge of his perfections but what the works of creation afford, it is not surprising that the doctrine of the resurrection should be unknown, and that men, in these circumstances, should be unable to bring it

forth to light. The correctness of this representation, I am aware, is questioned by some who seem to imagine, that one or two processes which come under our observation in the vegetable and animal kingdom, might, when the secrets of nature are more fully laid open by the investigations of scientific men, lead to the discovery of it. These processes, it will be generally acknowledged, bear but a very obscure and remote resemblance to the reanimation of a dead body after it has been completely decomposed, and its constituent parts incorporated with other animate and inanimate substances ; and, it is not unworthy of remark, that they were not perceived to bear upon the subject at all till " life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel." When once the truth of the doctrine is fully established, they furnish very apt and striking illustrations of it ; but no one ever could perceive in them anything to warrant the belief that the dead shall be raised, even if they might suggest the notion of such a thing to the mind. Although they are, perhaps, familiar to the reader, it may not be altogether useless to glance at them for a moment in this place.

The manner in which plants are derived from each other is one of them. We may not be able very minutely to trace the process, or to explain fully the way in which the plant springs up when certain external agencies are applied to the seed after it is cast into the ground ; but enough comes under our *cognizance to show*, in the most satisfactory manner, that

the seed must die and be decomposed in order that the staminal particle may be disengaged, and nourishment afforded to it in the first stages of the process of vegetation. After the seed remains a considerable time in the earth, and is, in a great measure dissolved, the germ which survives its dissolution begins to appear, and the plant arrives at maturity when the organization in which it was incepted is utterly destroyed. The purpose which the Creator designed should be answered by its going to decay, is the development of a latent organization possessed of the form and other properties which belonged to the one that is dissolved. Now, whilst this case affords an exhibition sufficiently clear, of one body when it goes to corruption transmitting to another an organization similar to its own, and retaining all its qualities; it bears but a very imperfect analogy to the reanimation of a dead body after it has been completely decomposed.

But, perhaps, the changes or transformations which some species of insects undergo at different periods, exhibit a somewhat closer resemblance to it. Many families of them pass through different states during the brief period of their existence, and the mode of existence in each of these states is essentially different from the mode of existence in the others. The caterpillar—a well-known instance—affords an illustration of this remark. That animal, after it continues for a season in a vermicular form, retires in the autumn to a place of safety; and there it passes into a chry-

salis. During the winter, while in that state, it is completely torpid and apparently lifeless; but in the spring or summer of the following year, it exhibits symptoms of returning animation, throws off its chrysalis form and comes forth a butterfly. It is still the same animal, however; the change brings it only to another and higher stage of its existence. But there is no reason to doubt, that before it extracted itself from the egg in which it was originally deposited, it possessed the rudiments of an organization which fitted it for flying through the air in the last stage of its being. This case, it is granted, bears a closer analogy to the subject than the former one, inasmuch as the dormant organization of the butterfly is altogether unlike the one in which it was enclosed, and is adapted to a mode of existence entirely different. But neither these, nor indeed any other of the processes of nature which may yet be more fully understood than they have hitherto been, could lead to the discovery of the doctrine in question. All the knowledge that we possess of the reanimation of the human body after it is consigned to the dust, and of the transformation which it shall undergo, is derived from another source. It is derived from the scriptures alone.

While this interesting and awful subject is unknown, the most confused and unsatisfactory notions respecting the future stage of our existence must be formed by men. And, indeed, until the fact is placed *beyond* all question, that the part of human nature

which is destroyed by death shall, at some future though distant period, be restored, some of the most important purposes of the Deity in reference to the human race must be shrouded in mystery. The tenement in which the soul is at present confined, is no doubt a mass of corruptible matter, but it forms a constituent part of the man ; and, therefore, while it is lying in ruins in the dust, the soul must, in some respects at least, be in an imperfect state ; and its restoration seems to be necessary to the perfecting of the happiness of man. Though it is greatly debased by sin, it is a most useful instrument to the soul. It is the medium through which are conveyed to it all its perceptions of external objects ; and it is by means of it that the soul, in the present state, holds intercourse with other beings. If, then, the body answers so many and such important purposes in the present world, there is every reason to suppose that it will, after it undergoes a complete transformation, answer purposes of a similar nature in a higher state of being.

Now, since the Creator at first contrived and formed such a wonderful structure, and, in common with all his other works, pronounced it to be “ very good,” we cannot, without impiety, consider it to be unworthy of the wisdom or goodness of God to form it anew after it has been dissolved in the grave ; and to fit it for wearing, along with the soul, the honours of immortality. We, however, are not left to our own conjectures upon the subject. The scriptures inform us, “ that there shall be a resurrection of the dead,

both of the just and unjust ;” and we may rest assured that the reanimation of the body—however useless and undesirable some may consider such a thing to be—will contribute greatly to the glory and blessedness of the righteous in the future state.

As that great and important event is connected with the remedial scheme which the Divine Being devised for the recovery of the human race from the ruins of the fall, it is not unreasonable to suppose that, at least, some obscure intimation of it was given when that scheme was originally announced ; and an order of means appointed to assist the faith of guilty men, till the promise contained in the announcement should be fulfilled. The body was doomed to return to corruption immediately after sin entered into the world ; and when we consider the object which God had in view in making known his purposes of grace at that early period, the belief almost forces itself upon the mind, that before the penalty was actually inflicted upon any one who believed the divine promise, the anticipation was cherished—to what extent it would be impossible to say—of a restoration of the whole man, in soul and body, from the effects of the curse. There is, indeed, no positive intimation contained in the sacred writings, on which the first generations of the human family could found such a hope ; but we have the best authority for believing that intimations were made, in all probability in the days of Adam, sufficiently clear to give rise to it, although *not recorded* by Moses. And if incidental notice is

of but one such intimation, by the inspired s of the new testament, that one instance is h to show that the faith and hope of those who before the flood, were not sustained by the tions which are upon record in the Mosaic are alone. When this truth is admitted—o one will question it, surely, who bows to the rity of the word of God—it is unwarrantable to ide, that the saints who were upon the earth in val ages were altogether ignorant of the fact, heir bodies shall, at some future period, be de- d from the power of death, though they go to tion in the grave. The resurrection of the indeed, forms such a glorious part of the pro- of God's people, and is necessary to the per- g of their happiness in the heavenly state, that n scarcely suppose the knowledge of it to have entirely withheld from them in any age or under ispensation. But it is requisite we should bring entiment somewhat more closely to the test of ure.

ave already stated that there is not, in that part e sacred writings which contains the history of rst generations of the human race, any direct ation respecting the subject; but there are some upon record which could scarcely fail to suggest tion of it to their minds, I allude here to some nstances connected with the history of Enoch. ems to have been employed as a teacher of that on, of the power of which he was a living

example, and to unfold the purposes of God in reference to men. This much, I think, is indicated by the language of Jude. He says—"And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying. Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." This so closely resembles the descriptions which are elsewhere given of the coming of Christ to judge the world, that there can be no doubt of that being the event which the antediluvian prophet foretold. And the prediction is clothed in language which at once conveys the idea to the mind, that men in their embodied state are the persons on whom judgment shall be executed. Indeed, the resurrection of the dead is so closely connected with the second coming of Christ, and the awful solemnities of the general judgment, as to render it extremely improbable that these two events were made the subject of prophetic announcement, whilst the other remained among the secret things which lie concealed in the mind of the Most High. And the reason why there is no direct mention made of it in this prophecy, seems to be, that the knowledge of it was previously communicated to those who enjoyed the advantages of Enoch's personal ministrations, and to whom he spoke in the name of the Lord.

But the manner in which he was removed from the

earth may be regarded as a proof of the doctrine. The sacred writer, when alluding to the circumstance, says, in the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews, "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God." Whatever notions were entertained respecting a future life by the contemporaries of Enoch, the slightest reflection upon the extraordinary manner in which he was taken away from this vale of mortality, was sufficient to suggest the notion to their minds, that in the higher sphere of human existence, the corporeal frame with which the soul is invested in this world, is necessary to the perfecting of its happiness; and that the same power which caught his body away to the regions of immortality without its being dissolved by death, could reanimate those which sleep in the dust. And we may safely conclude, that whilst his translation was an honour conferred upon himself because he "walked with God," it was designed to teach the important truth to those whom he left behind him, that those who "walked with God" as he did, should, like him, dwell with God for ever in the embodied state.

As it is unnecessary to dwell upon the subject, I shall pass on and consider the sentiments which the patriarch Job entertained and expressed respecting it. He is supposed by some to have lived as early as the time of Abraham; but others—and perhaps for weightier

reasons—fix the period somewhat later. As this, however, is a point upon which it is impossible to speak with any measure of certainty, we may venture to conclude, that what knowledge of the subject he possessed, was conveyed by traditionary reports conveyed from the antediluvians by Noah and his family. There is nothing on which we can rest the belief that he received it by immediate revelation; it is more likely that he obtained it through a different channel, and that it was possessed, in these countries, by others besides himself. The language he employs when speaking of it is highly animated, and it shows that the subject had a most salutary influence upon his mind.

In the nineteenth chapter of his book, he says, “ For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth : and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God : whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my veins be consumed within me.” Making all the allowance which can reasonably be required for the obscurity of the passage in the original, it is difficult, upon any legitimate principle of interpretation, to attach to it a meaning different from the one which is conveyed by the translation. And it is not a little surprising that efforts should be made to prove that it contains no allusion whatever to the resurrection of the body; and that the language is so unintelligible, *that it is difficult if not impossible to say precisely*

what its import is, or what sentiment the sacred writer intended to convey. This, to say the least, is very unlikely, considering the circumstances in which it was uttered. Job himself considered it to be both interesting and important ; for he expressed a wish that the language in which it was clothed might not be forgotten, but might be recorded in such a way as to survive the corroding influence of time and continue legible to the latest generations. And unless it had been to support some dubious theory, it perhaps never would have been questioned by any who admit the truth of the scriptures, that the words strongly and fully expressed the patriarch's hope of a blessed resurrection

But though the passage under consideration determines nothing respecting the matter, it seems evident from some other parts of the same book, that it was a subject with which he was perfectly familiar. I refer more particularly to what is stated in the fourteenth chapter. At the eleventh verse, he says, " As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and dryeth up ; so man lieth down, and riseth not : till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time and remember me ! If a man die, shall he live again ? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee : thou wilt have a desire

to the work of thine hands." An attentive perusal of the whole passage—although it is generally applied to a different subject—is sufficient to show that the re-animation of the dead is the event to which it relates.

The chapter begins with a pathetic description of the shortness and uncertainty of human life. Man is exhibited under a variety of emblems as a being whose earthly existence fleets rapidly away, and who soon disappears and sinks into forgetfulness. Being short-lived, and frail, and easily brought to destruction, the Almighty is entreated to "turn from him, that he may rest, till he accomplish as an hireling his day." Though no calamity come upon him to break down his frame suddenly and violently, it speedily goes to decay of itself, and mingles with the dust. But what becomes of it then? One would almost conclude from what immediately follows, that Job considered its reviviscence to be hopeless. "For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant." This is a phenomenon which is often seen, and it shows that the principle of vegetation, though apparently destroyed, may, in such a case, be revived when the requisite agencies are brought to bear upon it; but no agent in the economy of nature seems capable of reanimating the human frame after it is *laid in the grave*. "Man dieth, and wasteth away;

man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? Although the voice of reason without an impulse from faith is unable to respond to the question, the patriarch intimates his persuasion that the sleep of death, though of long duration, would not last for ever; but that it should continue only till the mighty change to the place which this mundane system is destined to undergo. "Till the heaven be no more, they shall awake, nor be raised out of their sleep."

After offering up a fervent prayer that he might be preserved from the storm of divine wrath which should sweep over the earth before that awful event happens, seemingly with the knowledge that the rising of the dead shall be contemporaneous with it—boldly he poses the question, "If a man die, shall he live again?" This question, from the manner in which it is put, does not indicate that the matter to which it relates was dubious, or that he was entirely ignorant of it; it is rather to be understood as a strong expression of his own convictions, and that he considered the fact to be beyond all doubt. Such being the

he calmly contemplated his own dissolution; in the confidence of faith, he says, "all the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come." The "appointed time" of which he here speaks, is not the period of his abode upon the earth, but the time during which his body shall remain in the grave; and the anticipated "change" can be understood other than the one which it shall undergo on the morning of the resurrection, when "this corruptible

shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality," when it shall be fashioned like to the glorious body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But he gives a more full and unequivocal expression to his thoughts upon the subject, when he says, "Thou shalt call and I will answer." On reflecting on this language, one would imagine--if he could banish from his mind all recollections about the period at which Job flourished--that he had lived under the gospel dispensation, and enjoyed the clearer light which was then shed upon the subject. He seems to have been as familiar with it, and as firmly established in its truth, as if he had heard the Saviour say, "the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth;" or had read the words of the apostle Paul, "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." But in whatever way it was made known to him, whether it was by tradition or by immediate revelation, there can be no doubt that it was "the voice of the Son of God," awakening the dead at the last day and summoning them to judgment he expected to hear. And instead of wishing to hide himself from his presence in the darkness of the tomb, he would joyfully answer the call by coming forth, bearing the image of his long expected Redeemer.

The concluding words still farther illustrate this *view of the subject*. "Thou wilt have a desire to

work of thine hands." The human frame, which originally formed by the hand of God, is obvious—the work" of which Job here speaks. Whilst lying in a state of dissolution, it seems to be destroyed; but God having "a desire" to it the work of his hands," shall restore it; and after it is purified, and the grossness of flesh and removed from it, construct it anew, and make it exhibit more strikingly the impress of its Creator as it did before it was marred by the stroke of . . . Such, in my opinion at least, are the sentiments contained in this passage; and, while it rests on record as the language of one who lived in archaic times, we are, I conceive, fully warranted to conclude that the doctrine of the resurrection was known and believed, many ages before the commencement of the Christian era, and even long before the establishment of the Mosaic economy.

Considering the darkness which generally prevailed in those remote ages, and the indirect manner in which some of the most important truths were revealed, it can scarcely be supposed that all the worshippers of the true God were so well acquainted with the doctrine in question, as those who live in more favourable circumstances; or that they were so fully convinced of its truth. But statements are found in and there in the old testament scriptures, which show that it was understood by the most eminent people, among whatever people, or in whatever place sojourning. We are furnished with an illustra-

tion of this remark in the case of Moses as well as in that of Job. Whether or not he was previously acquainted with the doctrine, it would, perhaps, be difficult to say; but it is implied in the declaration which Jehovah made to him at mount Horeb, when he commissioned him to go down to Egypt to deliver his people: and it is highly probable that Moses understood the whole truth intended to be conveyed by the declaration. Our Saviour, when reasoning with the Sadducees upon the subject, refers to it as a proof of the doctrine. "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead but of the living." It is not set forth in these words in such a clear and obvious manner as to strike the mind at once; but a moment's reflection will lead any one to see that it must be understood; and, that unless the dead are to be raised again, it would be difficult to comprehend what their import is.

Man is a compound being, consisting of a body and a soul, each of which is different from the other in its nature; and, when united, they constitute a human person. Although the soul can subsist in the full exercise of all its powers when separate from the body, it is not the whole man. The material organization which it used in this world as the instrument of its perceptions, is an essential part of it; and, while it is lying in the grave in a state of dissolution, *the man* is incomplete. The names, Abraham, Isaac,

and Jacob, therefore, must be understood as applicable to their entire persons, each being composed of a soul and a body. At present, the connexion betwixt these parts is dissolved; but, when Jehovah is called "the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," and acknowledges that appellation, it is a proof that their souls and bodies shall be again united; and that, after the union is effected, God will still sustain the endearing relation to them which the appellation indicates. Whatever was the primary object to be accomplished by giving the intimation, it could not be seriously considered by any anxious inquirer without leading him to this conclusion; and it was eminently fitted to enlarge the views of the people of God, as well as confirm their belief in the doctrine of the resurrection.

It will scarcely be questioned, I presume, that when the descendants of Abraham were called out of Egypt, and more distinctly recognized as the church and people of God, their condition, with respect to religious advantages, was greatly improved; and that they had more ample opportunities of obtaining the knowledge of the will of God than had previously been enjoyed by any portion of the human race. Although, in the code of laws which was framed by Jehovah himself for their special use, there was no direct mention made of a future life, or of the resurrection of the body, it is unreasonable to conclude, from such an omission, that the doctrine respecting either of *these important matters* was unknown to

them. It is vastly more probable that the traditional reports, and patriarchal revelations, on which the faith and hope of the saints who lived in ages anterior to that rested, were retained among the Jews ; that they greatly influenced their religious belief ; and that they were sufficient to preserve among them the knowledge of these important doctrines, until the spirit of prophecy descended, and unfolded more fully the mysteries of redemption. By that means a clearer light was shed upon the destinies of the human race, and the awful realities of a future life set forth in a more impressive manner.

No one can attentively peruse the Psalms of David and the other parts of prophetic scripture, without discovering hints and unequivocal intimations respecting the resurrection, as well as many allusions to it which must have been altogether inexplicable, except upon the supposition that the fact was known and generally believed under the Jewish dispensation. Such passages as the following will, perhaps, confirm the truth of this remark :—" Like sheep they are laid in the grave ; death shall feed on them ; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning ; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling. But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave ; for he shall receive me."—" As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness : I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness."—" For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell ; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Thou wilt show me the path of life ; in thy presence is fulness of joy ; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.”—“ He will swallow up death in victory ; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces.”—“ Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust ; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.”—“ I will ransom thee from the power of the grave ; I will redeem them from death : O death, I will be thy plagues ; O grave, I will be thy destruction.”—“ And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”* These passages, written at different periods in the Mosaic dispensation, and incorporated in the sacred books from which the Jews derived their knowledge of divine things, show, at least, that if they were ignorant of the subject, their ignorance was extremely culpable ; for it is scarcely possible that language clearer or more explicit could be employed to convey a notion of it to their minds.

But they were not ignorant of it. They fully understood the language, and experienced the salutary influence of the doctrine. It shed a bright and cheering radiance over the gloom of the grave ; and when

* Psalms xlix. 14, 15 ; xvii. 15 ; xvi. 10, 11.—Isaiah xxv. 8 ; xxvi. 19.—Hosea xiii. 14.—Daniel xii. 2.

periling their lives in the cause of righteousness, as some of them did, or when the last enemy, death, approached, to dissolve their visible connexion with this vale of mortality, they resigned their bodies to the dust, in the joyful hope that they should rise again to the possession of a new and immortal life. This is not a mere conjectural statement, it is a matter of fact. An inspired writer, when describing the manner in which the faith of the servants of God in ancient times was manifested, mentions some who received their dead raised to life again ; and others who were tormented, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." The hope that sustained these persons in such painful circumstances rested upon a foundation, the stability of which had previously been tried ; and the reason assigned for their choosing torture and death rather than life, upon the conditions submitted to them, is a proof as satisfactory as can well be desired—as much so, perhaps, as the subject is capable of—that under the Mosaic dispensation, which was a comparatively dark one, the doctrine of the resurrection was known and believed. It was not revealed to a favoured few merely, who were honoured with special communications from the Most High ; nor believed by some only, whose faith was of an exemplary nature ; it was known to all who were acquainted with the old testament scriptures, and seems to have formed a part of the popular belief within the pale of the Jewish community.

It must be admitted, however, that nothing more than the simple fact was known previous to the coming of Christ. And it was not till he had finished his work, and entered into his glory, that life and immortality were *clearly* brought to light. The more full revelation which was then made, did not consist so much in any additional confirmation which the fact received, as in making known the agency by which the resurrection of the dead shall be effected, the cause to which it is to be attributed, and the circumstances in which it shall take place. The discovery of these things invested the subject with a deeper interest—if that, indeed, were possible—and developed more clearly the gracious purposes of the Supreme Being respecting the human race. It brings out to view its connexion with the remedial scheme which was announced immediately after the fall; and teaches the people of God to trace the restoration of their bodies from the grave to the same great work, in virtue of which their souls are quickened from a death of trespasses and sins. This, if I mistake not, is the view of the subject which is exhibited by Christ and his apostles.

Our Saviour, as the great Teacher who was sent from heaven to instruct mankind, frequently, and in a variety of ways in his public ministrations, taught the doctrine of the resurrection. But it is questionable if the language he used in reference to the simple *fact* to which the doctrine relates, be clearer or more unequivocal than that which was employed by some

of the ancient prophets respecting the same subject. What they, under the influence of divine inspiration, previously revealed, he sanctioned by his authority; but he further declared, what was not before made known, that he, as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world, was the Agent who should reanimate the dead at the last day; and that he should do that for purposes connected with the work which he came to perform. On one occasion, when reasoning with the Jews concerning the design of his mission, and the blessedness of the man who should believe on him, he thrice repeated the saying, "I will raise him up at the last day." On another occasion, after referring to the doctrine as a source of consolation to some of his followers who were mourning the loss of a beloved relative, he said, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." And when unfolding his commission, and insisting upon the authority with which he was invested, he speaks of the resurrection as an event which will be brought about by his own immediate agency. "The hour is coming in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."

These solemn affirmations, I have no doubt, will be considered sufficient to satisfy those who acknowledge the Supreme divinity of the Saviour; and also *tend to confirm* their faith in the reality of the mo-

mentous fact to which they relate. He, however, did something more than merely announce himself as the person by whose power the resurrection shall be effected; he proved by the putting forth of his energy, in a way most likely to produce conviction, that he is able to realize his own declarations—I mean, his raising a number of individuals from the dead. He raised the only son of a widow in the city of Nain, when his friends were carrying him away to the grave. This he did, simply by touching the bier and commanding the young man to rise. With equal ease he raised to life again the daughter of Jairus, a ruler of the Jewish Synagogue; and even Lazarus, who had been in the grave till it was thought putrefaction had begun, rose at his command and came forth. These acts of his power, from their very nature, bear more directly than the others which he performed, upon the subject of the general resurrection, and prove beyond a doubt his power to raise the dead. Indeed, they ought to be viewed as so many exemplifications of the truth which he brought to light; and as indicating the manner in which his agency shall be put forth at the great day.

But the atonement which he made is the thing on which the mind reposes with the greatest confidence; and it is exhibited by those who were honoured fully to unfold the mysteries of redemption, as the cause to which that great event is to be traced. The apostle Paul, when contrasting the effects of the disobedience of Adam with those resulting from the mediation of

Christ, asserts, without introducing anything to warrant the inference that his assertion is to be understood in a qualified or limited sense, that the resurrection of the dead is one of them :—" Since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." When Adam committed the first act of transgression, the painful consequences of his disobedience were entailed upon the whole human family. He was their representative ; and having violated the law while he sustained that character, those whom he represented became liable to all the evils which he brought upon himself. The one act of disobedience which he committed exposed him to nothing less than death temporal and spiritual, and to an eternal separation from God both in body and soul ; and had it not been for the gracious intervention of " the second man, the Lord from heaven," the fearful penalty must have been endured, in its full extent, by himself and his posterity.

The appellation, " the last Adam," which is given to him, is obviously designed to show, that he is a representative as well as " the first" one ; so that whatever benefits are secured by his mediation will be enjoyed by those whom he represents in the same way, and upon the same grounds, as are the consequences of our first father's sin endured by those for whom he acted in a similar capacity. As, therefore, the death of the body is one of these consequences, its *restoration* from the grave, and its re-union with the

soul, is one of the benefits secured by the work of Christ; and it will be ultimately enjoyed by all his people. His vicarious sufferings and death, while they fully expiated human guilt, were the means of destroying the empire of death, and of “delivering them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” These are the great purposes for which he assumed our nature and put himself in the place of the guilty; and we have the most ample assurance that they are accomplished by his rising from the grave. If the debt had not been paid, he, as the surety, would not have been released: he would have been detained under the power of death, and the hopes of his people would have been blasted for ever. In that case, the curse in its unmitigated form would still have been suspended over them, and they would have had no hope of being raised to the enjoyment of a new and a better life, after the original threatening was executed. Their faith would be vain, they would be still in their sins, and they would have no comfort respecting those who have died in Christ. But his resurrection was a public attestation that his atonement satisfied divine justice, and was accepted by the Supreme Lawgiver; whilst it asserted his power over death and the grave. He rose, not as an individual who stood alone, but as the representative of his people, and as the Head of his body the Church; and his rising in that capacity has infallibly secured the resurrection of all who are connected with him. Since the Head has come forth from the tomb, the

members will follow in due time ; and will, by the same means, in virtue of which he was released, be set free from their loathsome prison-house, fitted for glory, honour, and immortality.

But this is not the only form in which the important truth under consideration is set forth in the new testament. It is confirmed and illustrated by one of the most prominent and significant of the Mosaic institutions—I mean the law respecting the first-fruits. That law is alluded to, in the following terms, in the fifteenth chapter of Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians:—"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits ; afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming." The Jews, before they began to reap the produce of their fields, were commanded to cut a sheaf of corn—and it was generally the best of its kind that was selected for the purpose—and after it was prepared the priest presented it before the Lord as a wave-offering. When it was offered in the appointed way, it was accepted for the whole nation ; but until that was done, it was unlawful to commence the harvest, or to use for ordinary purposes any of the fruits which were produced that season. That act was an acknowledgment on their part that Jehovah was the Being to whom the land with all its productions properly belonged ; it was designed to sanctify the fruits of the ground, and to be a pledge that the appointed weeks of harvest should be given.

It is worthy of remark—and the circumstance seems to point out very clearly the design of the institution—that the first-fruits were appointed to be offered on the day after the Sabbath which immediately succeeded the Passover. That was the very day on which Christ rose from the dead; and his resurrection, I have no doubt, was the great event which it prefigured. In that case, the bodies of his people are solemnly acknowledged to be his property; they are, although lying in corruption, sanctified as a part of his purchased possession; and his resurrection is the pledge of theirs, in the same way that the presenting of the first-fruits was a pledge of the harvest. Being “planted together in the likeness of his death, they shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” What a delightful prospect is this! Though their bodies remain for ages in the mansions of the dead, they shall rise and come forth in a more glorious form, freed from all the pollution and grossness of their animal constitution. When they feel themselves thus emancipated; when they see “the last enemy” crushed, and his power for ever destroyed, with what transports of joy will they exclaim, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” Their redemption will then be complete; and while they will feel all the vigour of immortal youth in their renovated nature, their external appearance will indicate at once their

conformity to the Saviour, and the height to which they are raised in the scale of intelligence.

The manner in which that event shall take place, and some of the circumstances connected with it are also clearly revealed. It has, I think, been too hastily concluded by some, that it will be effected by different displays of almighty power : that the Saviour will first bring forth his own people in one great company and place them at his right hand, and then awake the wicked and summon them before his seat. This notion does not appear to me to be in accordance with the revelations of scripture upon the subject. They seem to represent the dead as rising simultaneously in one promiscuous company when the last trumpet shall sound. The principal, if not the only text which is generally advanced in proof of the opinion referred to, is one which, upon examination, will be found to warrant no such conclusion. It is the following :—“ For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” When the sacred writer affirms that “ the dead in Christ shall rise first,” the language can mean nothing else than that the event to which it relates will be immediately followed by some other one of which he is speaking. That other event is certainly not the rising of the wicked, but the changing of the living ; for they are the class of persons mentioned in distinction from “ the dead in *Christ*.” This, I think, is evident from what is stated

in the preceding verse. "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep." The apostle classes himself here with those who shall be alive upon the earth at the second and glorious appearing of Jesus Christ; and discloses the fact, that the physical change which they must undergo before being "caught up to meet the Lord in the air," shall not take place till after the dead are raised. They shall not in the experiencing of that wonderful transformation *anticipate or go before* "them which are asleep." The rising of the wicked, as a distinct class, is not even alluded to in the passage; and unless we suppose that the resurrection of all the dead will be a simultaneous event, many of the descriptions which are given of it in the scriptures would be destitute of propriety, and could scarcely be considered to be in accordance with truth. Let the words of the Saviour be taken as an illustration of this remark:—"When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory; and before him shall be gathered all nations, and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." But if the righteous rise in one company at one time, and the wicked in a different company at another time, there could be no process of separation resembling that which is here described. His language elsewhere greatly strengthens this representation. "The hour is coming in

which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth ; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life ; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." What mode of expression can more clearly show that all the inhabitants of the tomb shall rise together, and be summoned to appear in one vast, promiscuous assembly before the judgment-seat ?

The rising of the dead, we are taught to believe, will not be preceded by any circumstances in the course of nature to lead an unthinking world to expect it. It will take place unawares, and surprise men in the midst of their pleasures and crimes. The tide of human affairs will be rolling on as formerly, and the great mass of mankind sunk in indifference and sensuality. " As in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away ; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be." Seeing no visible indications of the approaching change, and all things continuing as they were from the beginning of the creation, they will be forming plans and executing them with as much eagerness as if time had but begun its career.

" No sign of change appeared : to every man
That day seemed as the past. From noontide path
The sun looked gloriously on earth, and all
Her scenes of giddy folly smiled secure,

When suddenly, alas, fair earth ! the sun
Was wrapped in darkness, and his beams returned
Up to the throne of God, and over all
The earth came night, moonless and starless night.
Nature stood still. The seas and rivers stood,
And all the winds, and every living thing.
The cataract, that like a giant wroth,
Rushed down impetuously, as seized, at once,
By sudden frost with all his hoary locks,
Stood still : and beasts of every kind stood still.
A deep and dreadful silence reigned alone !
Hope died in every breast, and on all men
Came fear and trembling. None to his neighbour spoke.
Husband thought not of wife, nor of her child
The mother, nor friend of friend, nor foe of foe.
In horrible suspense all mortals stood ;
And, as they stood and listened, chariots were heard
Rolling in heaven. Revealed in flaming fire,
The angel of God appeared in stature vast,
Blazing, and lifting up his hand on high,
By him that lives for ever, swore, that time
Should be no more."

The appearance of the Son of God in the clouds, clothed in all the pomp and overwhelming grandeur of the upper world, will produce feelings in the minds of men which no language can adequately express. What consternation and dismay will seize them when they hear the thunders of the last trumpet, when they see the dead rising from the graves and all nature dissolving around them ! Many whose spirits have just departed, and whose bodies are still stretched upon the couches where they expired, will start up in a moment before those who ministered to them during the last struggles of nature ; some, while on

the way to the grave will, like the widow of Nain's son, burst from the tomb in which they are enclosed ; and others, while being let down into the narrow house, will prevent the completion of the funeral obsequies, throw aside their grave-clothes and every vestige of mortality, and hasten away to take their place before the " great white throne." Scarce shall the astonished spectators have witnessed these things when they themselves will undergo a change. " We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump—for the trumpet shall sound—and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." Such will be the closing scene of the great drama of time ! such the circumstances connected with the rising of the dead ! Though fraught with all that is terrible to the wicked, they afford a delightful prospect to the people of God ; and will be the prelude to the full and everlasting realization of their most elevated hopes. The whole scene will be viewed by them with composure and confidence. From the midst of the ruins of creation they will lift up their heads with joy ; and when looking to the great Being who shall then be seen descending through the sky in flaming fire, attended by hosts of angels, they will exclaim, with holy exultation, " Lo ! this is our God ; we have waited for him, he will save us."

CHAPTER III.

ON THE NATURE OF THE BODY WHICH SHALL BE RAISED.

I SEE no reason to admit—what, indeed, is very frequently and very confidently asserted—that the sacred writers have maintained a guarded silence respecting the resurrection body ; that there is nothing, or next to nothing in the scriptures to assist us in forming a conception of it ; and that whatever may be said about it, can, therefore, be regarded as nothing better than mere conjecture. If that were, in reality, the case, it would be useless to speculate upon the subject ; and any inquiry into it might be treated as the result of a sinful curiosity. It is freely admitted, that when the sacred writers speak of the circumstances connected with the future state, they do not, by any means, give a minute description of the nature, and qualities, and peculiar formation of the material frame with which the righteous shall be invested ; but they do not pass over the subject in such a way, as to leave the impression upon the mind, that it is completely enveloped in mystery, or of so little importance as to render it unworthy of being inquired into. Instead of their imagined silence rebuking every inquiry as an impious intrusion into the secrets of the

other world, they have communicated as much information respecting the subject as shows, that they considered the contemplation of it interesting and useful in no small degree.

It is a matter of comparative indifference, whether that information is contained in, what may be termed, incidental notices, or in more full and particular assertions; or whether it is to be derived from inferences drawn from general principles. The particular mode in which it is conveyed does not lessen its value; and although it may not, perhaps, be so ample nor so obvious as the information communicated about other matters connected with the life to come, that only renders investigation the more desirable; and when such an investigation is conducted with a sacred regard to the dictates of inspiration, it may serve to give us more accurate conceptions of what human nature shall be in its redeemed and perfected state. If such be its tendency, we may ask, without presumption or wishing to be wise above what is written, "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?"

The change which takes place upon man at death, whatever else it involves, is a transition from one state of existence to another. Nothing which essentially belongs to him, as a human being, is absolutely destroyed by the change. The soul, as soon as it takes place, passes on to immortality, carrying with it unimpaired the principle of consciousness, and *the vivid recollection of all the actions which it per-*

ed in the initial stage of its being. But we are ed by the highest authority, that it is not the alone which is destined to exult over the grave, the whole man—the very nature which was nur- amid the cares, and sorrows, and sufferings of probationary state. In that case, the other part e man, over which death now triumphs, must ience a reviviscence, and in an improved state, on to immortality as well as the soul. The very 1, indeed, of a resurrection is, that the body 1 was destroyed by death shall be restored; and its elementary parts, collected from the four 1 of heaven, shall, under the hand of the infinite igence, when being again put together, assume a conformation as shall clearly show it to be the body which was laid in the grave, although in respects changed. All that constitutes personal ty and individual existence will thus be pre- d and carried forward to the next stage of being, ill be perpetuated through an endless duration. ing short of this will fulfil the designs of Heaven ting our race, or realize the anticipations which eople of God are warranted to cherish.

w that will be effected, it is impossible for us to s there are facts connected with the nature and itution of the human frame which, apparently at involve the subject in perplexity. The par- , for instance, which compose the body are in a of perpetual change. So rapidly, indeed, does ocess go on, that during the course of an ordin-

ary life, the body is supposed to be renewed several times. The change, however, takes place so imperceptibly, as to leave the consciousness of our identity untouched.

“ This frame, compacted with transcendent skill,
Of moving joints obedient to my will ;
Nurs'd from the fruitful glebe, like yonder tree,
Waxes and wastes—I call it *mine*, not *me*.
New matter still the mouldering mass sustains,
The *mansion* chang'd—the *tenant* still remains.”

After death, when it is decomposed, it enters, in a variety of ways, into other living bodies ; so that the matter which at one period formed part of one human body may, and frequently does, at another period, form part of another human body. This fact, taken in connexion with the nature of matter itself, has led some to conclude, that the same atoms which are consigned to the dust will not be raised again, and that such a thing is not necessary ; because the soul, retaining its consciousness through all the stages of its existence, shall, after the resurrection, feel itself to be the same thinking, intelligent being which lived and acted in this world, although connected with a material organization totally different with respect to the particles which composed it, from the one with which it was connected in the present world. However much such considerations may affect some minds, those who believe the doctrine of the resurrection will not be very solicitous about having the subject divested of all the perplexities in which it seems to

be involved ; they will, without hesitancy, believe, that the same almighty Being who can reanimate the dead, is able to do it in such a way as to preserve entire the truth of revelation and the personal identity of men.

The sacred writers, it ought to be remembered, when treating of this subject, employ language adapted to the common sense of mankind ; and evidently wish to convey the notion, that the future body will, in a sense not inconsistent with the real state of things, be the same body which was laid in the grave. If that were not the case, there would, in truth, be no resurrection at all ; one essential part of human nature would be lost ; and those parts of scripture which relate to the rising of the dead would not only have no meaning, they would be destitute of truth. But in order to constitute the resurrection body, the same body which was laid in the grave, it is not necessary that all the atoms of which it was composed should be collected and reunited ; it may with propriety be said to be the same body if it springs from some staminal or indestructible parts of the one which is destroyed by death. That there are such parts in the human frame, is now fully ascertained. The discoveries made in chemical science have established the fact, that one of the elementary parts of all animal substances is of such a nature, as to preserve its identity during any period of time, and through all the changes it may undergo. Such being the case, we may conclude, that some essential part of the cor-

poreal frame will be preserved entire, and constitute the basis of the resurrection body.

This accords with the view of the subject given by Paul in the fifteenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians. To the question, "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" he replied, "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat or some other grain: but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. So also is the resurrection of the dead." This illustration is evidently designed to intimate, that there is some part of the human frame incapable of being decomposed; that it will retain its identity through all the changes to which the body may be subjected; and that out of this staminal part the future body will be formed. That is precisely what takes place in the process of vegetation. A seed after it is cast into the earth, in a short time dies or is decomposed; but the small germ from which the plant springs, resists the influence of the agents which dissolve the other parts of the seed; and it derives its nourishment, in the first stages of the process, from the substance to which they are reduced. The plant, therefore, with all its leaves and flowers and fruit, is nothing else than the full development of the staminal particle which was contained in the seed. The change which *it undergoes* while embedded in the earth is necessary

to the production of such an effect ; and before the latent principle can burst forth, and the new organization appear, the seed must be dissolved. In like manner, when the body dies, it goes to corruption in the grave ; but the process of dissolution will only disengage—if the phrase may be allowed—those elements which shall appear when the empire of death is destroyed, and shall enter into the constitution of the resurrection body. But the body which shall emerge from the tomb will be essentially the same body which was consigned to it, although possessed of different qualities. These are mere accidents, which may be connected with it without constituting it a different body. In some such way as this will the personal identity of every one be preserved ; and the righteous shall, after their redemption is completed, feel themselves to be the same intelligent beings who lived and suffered in this lower world—the same not only with respect to the mind, but the same with respect to the whole man. They shall retain their consciousness and the recollection of the events which happened during their sublunary existence, and shall be invested with an organization formed out of the one with which they were encumbered in the sphere of their labours and tribulations. That will be requisite to give a proper zest to the felicities of heaven, and to keep up, through eternity, the remembrance of what they once were, and the evils from which they were rescued.

Their bodies, however, shall undergo a wonderful

transformation. " They are sown in corruption, they shall be raised in incorruption : they are sown in dishonour, they shall be raised in glory : they are sown in weakness, they shall be raised in power : they are sown natural bodies, they shall be raised spiritual bodies." These qualities which shall be imparted to the future body will, in some measure, change its nature, and fit it for aiding the glorified spirit in its pleasures and pursuits in the immediate presence of God.

But it will be requisite to explain somewhat particularly the nature of these qualities.

First, " It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption." The human body in its present state, like all other material things, is liable to decay and dissolution. It is invaded by innumerable diseases which tarnish its beauty, derange its mechanism, and ultimately reduce it to a mass of putrefaction. Sometimes, indeed, under the influence of disease, and ere life is extinct, it becomes so loathsome as to render it almost impossible for the most devoted friends to perform to the sufferer the offices which are necessary ; and when the spirit quits the body, they hasten to conceal it in the darkness of the tomb. There it goes to corruption and mingles with its kindred dust. But when reanimated on the morning of the resurrection, it shall be incorruptible and immortal like its Creator. No diseases shall invade it any more ; nor shall it, after it has been employed as the vehicle of the soul through an interminable series of ages,

exhibit the slightest symptoms of decay or any tendency to dissolution. It shall continue for ever fresh as when it started from the grave, and its exquisite mechanism capable of giving expression to all the volitions of the glorified spirit which animates it. The state on which it shall enter at the resurrection will be its ultimate condition—the highest stage of its progress ; so that no other change will be requisite to fit it for performing through eternity the functions of a spiritual existence. It shall die no more. It shall never again see corruption.

Second, “ It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory.” Death, whatever it may become to the righteous in virtue of the mediation of Christ, is in itself dishonourable, being an expression of the divine displeasure against sin. It is the formal execution of the original threatening, “ dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return.” In that case it is not a painful thing merely, it is ignominious in the extreme ; and it reduces the body to a state of the deepest degradation. The pangs of dissolution are those of a malefactor enduring the penalty of the law ; and the funeral obsequies, however splendid and imposing, cannot conceal the disgrace to which the body is subjected when it is consigned to the grave. In that dark and loathsome place it shall be shut up till the ends of the Most High are answered. But how dishonoured is it there ! Its beauty is marred, its symmetry is destroyed, it is a companion of noisome reptiles. That dishonour, however, shall be rolled away,

and the frame which, in death, exhibited all the marks of the curse, shall come forth from the tomb shining with a heavenly lustre, and glorious beyond conception. So wonderful, indeed, will be the transformation, that its splendour shall equal that of the sun at noon-day, and vie, perhaps, with that of the highest seraph before the throne. Not the faintest trace of its humiliation shall then be seen upon it, nor anything to bespeak its former degradation. Its appearance will indicate its destiny, and show that it is designed for higher purposes and a nobler sphere of existence. How different will it be in appearance from the clod of earth, the heap of sordid dust which was consigned to the tomb ! Its structure and mechanism will be of the most exquisite description, and exhibit a glory worthy of him who redeemed it from the effects of sin.

Third, “ It is sown in weakness, it shall be raised in power.” The body, in its present state, is weak and easily fatigued. Even at the period when it is most vigorous, it sinks into a state of languor and exhaustion by protracted or excessive mental excitement. And, when the infirmities of age set in upon it, it not only is incapable, in its wonted degree, of following the soul in its activities ; it retards its movements, and seems to convey to it a portion of its own debility. The labours of a brief existence in this world entirely prostrate its strength, and death renders it absolutely incapable of assisting the soul in *its operations*. It is, on that account, unfit for an

endless duration. But when it undergoes the transformation which awaits it, it shall be powerful and vigorous, capable of perpetual exercise without weariness or fatigue. The soul, being freed from the incumbrances of mortality, shall engage, with all its powers, in the employments of the upper world, and pursue, with an ardour perpetually growing in intensity, the objects which are suited to its nature in a state of perfection ; but the body will be able to accompany it in its remotest excursions and loftiest flights without being weakened. Nor will the ecstasies produced by contemplating the grandeur of heaven, or by interchanging sentiments and feelings with the high intelligences before the throne, be followed by languor or debility. Instead of being an impediment, it will greatly assist the mind in its operations ; and its elasticity and vigour shall remain unimpaired through an interminable series of ages. It will require no relaxation, nor any repose to resuscitate its energies ; nor will the decrepitude of years be felt by it any more.

Fourth, “ It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.” A natural, or—as the word more properly signifies—an *animal* body, is one which is subject to animal wants and propensities, and requires to be supported by meats and drinks. The presence of the soul, although it is the principle of vitality, is not of itself capable of sustaining the life of an animal frame. It requires the assistance of other means ; and it has an organization fitted for carrying on all the operations necessary for its support. But when

raised from the dead its internal economy shall be completely changed. All the organs peculiar to an animal frame shall be destroyed. "Meats for the stomach, and the stomach for meats; but God shall destroy both it and them." This shows that the resurrection body will not depend for support on any such means; it shall be sustained in a way totally different, and be superior to the mean gratifications peculiar to an animal life. It shall be spiritual in its nature, etherealized, perhaps, to the highest degree of which matter is susceptible, and fitted to be the instrument of the soul in the most exalted services of the heavenly state. It will be capable of the most vigorous exertions and the swiftest movements; and its organs will be so exquisitely constructed as to convey to the soul perceptions which shall generate feelings of ecstatic delight. Suppose it to be as much refined as to resemble light in its properties—and, for aught we know to the contrary, it may be much more subtle than even that fluid—it would be capable of movements of the swiftness of which we can form no adequate conception. That substance, it is well known, moves with amazing velocity; so that, were the material vehicle with which the soul shall be invested in the future state equally subtle, its locomotive powers would be prodigiously increased. And such, if not vastly superior, we have reason to conclude, will be the qualities of the spiritual body, when purified from the grossness of flesh and blood.

It is true, that matter in any form in which it can exist, is inert and absolutely incapable of originating motion ; but when it is so refined as to be imponderable and imperceptible, it might, when organized by the Supreme Intelligence, be made subservient to purposes as an instrument of the mind, for which a mere animal frame would be altogether unfit. When the soul is embodied in a structure of that nature, it shall not only be free from physical restraints, and feel itself at liberty to range through the universe with the rapidity of a seraph ; its thoughts and attention will not be occupied about the wants of the body, nor about anything in reference to its preservation. “ Such a body would need no instinctive dread of dissolution ; nor would it have its cravings, its appetites, or its sensual propension ; or to say all in a word, it would have no welfare of its own to care for, or to assert. Instead of an importunate controversy, never well adjusted, and never brought to a conclusion, between body and spirit, there would be, on the one side, the sheer passivity of a tool, or engine ; and, on the other side, the unchecked supremacy of a superior nature. There would be one class of interests only to be thought of, and only one class of occupations to be followed. The body, with its complement of powers, applicable to its congenial element—matter, would be to the Spirit, precisely what now the senses and the muscular system are (while in a healthy condition) to the animal will. Not only do not the eye, and the ear, and the hand, ever repug-

nate, or plead for their particular interests ; but they are almost, or entirely forgotten, while the animal will is eagerly employing them to effect its purposes. And thus, as we may imagine, the spiritual body shall be so purely the instrument of the master power, that it will barely, if at all, enter into the consciousness of a separate existence."* The advantages, indeed, arising from a spiritual corporeity are numerous and varied ; and, as a means of increasing happiness, it will be found to be greater, perhaps, than we, at present, can imagine.

As the circumstances in which the spiritual body shall be placed, will be, in so many respects, different from those which are suited to the animal economy ; and as the sphere in which it is destined to move will be immeasurably extended, we may safely conclude that the nature and number of its organs will be adapted to these circumstances, and to the sphere in which its capabilities are to be developed. Among the different tribes of animals with which we are acquainted, we perceive great and striking differences both with respect to the nature and number of their organs of sensation ; but, in every case, there is a remarkable adaptation, in these organs, to the functions which the animals have to perform, and the circumstances in which they are placed. Many of the lower grades have comparatively few senses.

* *Physical Theory of Another Life*, pp. 116, 117.

Some, there is reason to think, have but one sense, some have two, and some have more ; but man, although in the highest grade, has only five. Yet, through the medium of that limited number, he derives a knowledge of external nature surprisingly great and varied. *

That could not be the case, however, unless there was a perfect adaptation, in the organs of sensation, to external objects. The eye, for instance, is adjusted with the greatest precision to the laws which regulate the transmission and refraction of the rays of light ; and, by its own mechanism, it performs all the functions necessary to vision in a variety of different circumstances. It can, when the light is faint, without any extraneous assistance, dilate the aperture through which the rays pass to the retina, that the object may be distinctly seen, and contract it again when the light is strong, that vision may be performed without pain ; and what is equally wonderful, it possesses the capability of producing all the changes requisite for seeing objects at different distances. Besides, its humours are so nicely composed, as to prevent the pencils of light passing through them from being separated into different colours—a thing which would have taken place, to a certain extent, had they all possessed the same degree of refracting power—so that the objects of vision would have been tinged as if viewed through a prism.* In virtue of

* *Paley's Natural Theology.*

these adaptations, objects, whether near or at a greater distance, are distinctly seen, and the vivid and countless hues which adorn the face of nature distinguished.

What is true respecting the adaptation of the eye to the objects of vision, is equally true respecting all the other organs of sensation. They are all nicely adapted to their respective functions, and to the objects, the knowledge of whose qualities they are the instruments of conveying to the mind.

If, however, the adaptation of the organs of sense to external objects had not been so complete as it really is, or had their number not been so great, the means of enjoyment at present within the reach of man would not have been available, at least to the extent they now are, for the purpose of enlarging his knowledge and augmenting his happiness. If he were deprived, for instance, of the organs of hearing or of vision, what a range of ideas in either case would be shut out from his mind ! In the one case, he would be utterly insensible to the most exquisite harmony, and could form no conception whatever of sound ; in the other, he would feel as if a funeral pall were thrown over the beautiful and sublime scenery of the earth and the heavens. All would be enveloped in midnight darkness, and there would be no possibility of conveying to his mind the notion of colour. But no one, surely, supposes that the organs of sensation which man possesses, although perfect of their kind, make him acquainted with all the *qualities* of the objects of nature. Were their capabili-

ties but enlarged, although their number were not increased—a thing which infinite wisdom and almighty power could easily do—his knowledge might, by that means, be increased to an indefinite extent. He might, were his eyes adapted to minute objects, not only perceive, with the greatest distinctness, the varied wonders both of animate and inanimate nature, which are seen at present only by suitable instruments; he might perceive innumerable objects too minute to be discerned even through microscopes of the greatest power, all indicating contrivance and bearing the visible impress of a divine hand. Or were they adjusted for a wider range of vision, he might see celestial objects with vastly more distinctness than he can now do with the assistance of the best instruments of human contrivance. He might see the planet Uranus not as he now does, like an almost imperceptible point in the heavens, he might perceive it as a body of prodigious magnitude, accompanied by a number of satellites driving through space with tremendous rapidity; he might perceive the magnificent structure and sublime scenery of Saturn, and see the effects produced upon its surface by its splendid assemblage of rings and moons; and he might be able to survey the planet Jupiter so minutely as to descry its inhabitants, and become acquainted with their nature and the pursuits in which they are engaged. Or were he to look beyond the limits of the system to which our globe belongs, instead of seeing a number of what seem to be mere luminous

points scattered irregularly over the sky, he would behold myriads of suns equal, perhaps superior to our own in splendour ; with countless multitudes of planetary worlds performing their revolutions round about them. Such an enlargement of his powers of vision as is here supposed, by bringing more immediately under his cognizance the innumerable and stupendous creations of the Great Supreme, would open new fields of contemplation, and have an effect upon his condition as an intelligent being, more beneficial, perhaps, than we can imagine. And were the capabilities of all his other organs of sensation enlarged in proportion, he would be able to explore many of the recesses of nature which are now concealed from his view ; he would have access to innumerable sources of enjoyment from which he is at present excluded ; and he would discover manifestations of divine wisdom and power and goodness of which he is altogether ignorant.

These considerations make it sufficiently obvious, that the organs of sensation in the human frame are adapted to the objects by which it is at present surrounded, and that they are the means of conveying such a knowledge of external nature as the Creator has deemed it requisite for man to possess ; but that, instead of leading to the conclusion that the organs of the future body shall be precisely the same, in every respect, as those of the corporeal vehicle with which man is now invested, affords ground to believe, *that they will be adapted to the glorious objects and*

sublime scenery of the new heavens and the new earth. We, at present, it is true, have no knowledge of any other senses than those which man now possesses ; but our ignorance of the matter cannot, surely, be considered as a proof that no such senses are possessed by other beings, or that man will not possess them in a higher state of existence. Were we to reason in such a way, we should presumptuously limit our belief in the Creator's power by our knowledge, and measure the enjoyments of immortality by our experience. It is much more reasonable, and more in accordance with the revelations of scripture upon the subject, to suppose, that man, when delivered from all the effects of sin, will be elevated in the scale of intelligence ; and that his body, as well as his soul, shall be so fashioned and improved as to correspond, in every respect, to the new and more glorious circumstances in which he shall be placed. It will be a suitable instrument to the soul in its highest operations ; and while it will enable it to hold intercourse with beings of a different order, it will be the means of bringing it into contact with countless objects which are, at present, beyond the range of its perceptions. The inconceivably greater happiness which the soul shall enjoy in its redeemed state, the pursuits in which it shall be engaged, and the scenery which shall be spread out before it, and which will, doubtless, be widely different from that around our earthly habitation, render it probable, that its organs of sensation—more in number, in all pro-

bability, than five—will be capable of higher functions than are the organs of the frame with which it is invested in the present state.

It can scarcely be doubted, indeed, that such will be the case when we consider the fact, that from the contemplation of the works of creation will spring a great part of the happiness of the righteous in the future world. Although there will be a particular locality assigned to them as their special residence, they shall be denizens of the universe, the grandeur and magnificence of which shall lie open to their inspection. The sphere which shall be prepared as a habitation for them, in whatever part of space it may be situated, will be decorated with all that is lovely, with all that is fitted to produce emotions of wonder and delight ; and judging from the description which is given of it in the scriptures, it will infinitely surpass in beauty our world before the blighting influence of the curse fell upon it. And it is not improbable that it will exhibit in its structure and decorations, manifestations of the Deity so glorious, that it will require other organs of sensation more acute and perfect than those we now possess, to convey perceptions of them to the mind. There may not, indeed, be there, objects corresponding to those which minister to the animal part of our nature in the present world ; but there may—we may almost assume it as certain that there will—be objects whose qualities will be infinitely better fitted to impart enjoyment to spiritual *beings*. The most fragrant odours and delicious

tastes may afford no gratification to man after he is purified from the grossness of an animal constitution ; but he will, doubtless, have the means of perceiving other qualities of external nature, and have other inlets through which immense accessions of knowledge and happiness will be conveyed to his mind.

Before dismissing the subject, it may be proper, perhaps, to state what, we have some reason at least to suppose, will be the exterior conformation of the body which shall be raised from the grave. As that, however, is a matter of inferior importance, and having only some considerations of a general nature to assist us in forming our notions respecting it, my remarks shall be the more brief ; and made chiefly for the purpose of leading to inquiry and reflection.

Let it be supposed, then—and the supposition can scarcely be deemed an extraordinary one, although there had not been a single hint thrown out upon the subject by any of the sacred writers—that, whatever changes its internal economy shall undergo, the future body will be similar in structure and form to the present one ; and that the original symmetry and visible contour of the human frame, which was made in the garden of Eden, will be preserved in the immortal body with which the righteous shall be invested in the next stage of their existence. God made man at first in his own image, and conferred upon him, in the paradisiacal state, high and peculiar honours. The beauty and majesty of his outward

form, as well as the qualities of his mind, contributed to render him the chief of all the Creator's works, and to make him stand forth as the noblest example of creative wisdom which is to be found amongst the productions of the first six days of the history of our world. That form, the outlines of which were drawn by a divine hand, was faultless in the eyes of the almighty Maker, and pronounced by him to be "very good." And if it was so originally at its formation, when it was evidently fitted for immortality, what reason have we to suppose, that it will exhibit a different conformation when it shall be restored, at the resurrection, to the honours which it had lost by sin? There is, at least, nothing revealed to warrant such a supposition. The circumstances of the case, on the other hand, not only suggest, they seem strongly to favour the opposite one.

Besides, the Son of God, when he came from heaven to deliver men from the effects of sin, assumed a body like to that which we now wear; and by that wonderful act of condescension put an honour upon the very outward form of humanity, which leads us to believe, that it will be carried forward to that more elevated state of being for which his mysterious incarnation was designed to prepare the human race. After he returned from the mansions of the dead, his external appearance was unchanged; and although his body undoubtedly underwent a complete transformation when he ascended to the upper world, it *still retains*, amid all the splendours which invest it,

the visible form which it exhibited while he dwelt upon earth. To be convinced that such is the case, we have but to read the description of his appearance which the apostle John gives in the first chapter of the book of the Revelation :—" I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And, being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks ; and in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the breasts with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow ; and his eyes were as a flame of fire ; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace ; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars ; and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword ; and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." There are as many particulars enumerated in this description as to enable any one to perceive, at once, that the external form of the Saviour's glorified humanity, as it is now displayed on the throne of the universe, is not materially, if at all, different from what it was previous to the change which was effected upon it.

This fact appears to me greatly to strengthen the supposition ; because it is expressly intimated, that the future bodies of the righteous are to exhibit a conformation similar to his ; that his, indeed, is the pattern according to which they are to be fashion-

ed:—"As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."—"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Now, if the material structure, which the divine Redeemer has carried with him to the right hand of the Majesty on high, resemble, in its exterior conformation, the animal economy in which he suffered—and his appearance on the isle of Patmos indicated that it does so—some will be disposed, perhaps, to consider the affirmation as something more than mere conjecture, that the mould in which the human frame was originally cast, will be used again on the morning of the resurrection; and that the materials of the present organization, which will be collected at the great day by Omnipotence, shall assume an external conformation similar to that of the corruptible bodies which we now wear.



CHAPTER IV.

ON THE FUTURE ABODE OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

ALTHOUGH the scriptures contained no information whatever upon the subject, we might consider it as probable, if not almost certain, that human nature, after it is renovated and freed from all its imperfections, both corporeal and spiritual, shall have some particular locality assigned to it as a habitation; some material world where its powers will be exercised, and where the ultimate purposes of Heaven respecting it will be gradually unfolded. The future body, although different in many important particulars from the animal frame which forms a part of our nature in this world, will nevertheless be a material structure, and must of necessity have a material dwelling-place. The sphere on which its capabilities shall be developed, will possess solidity and extension as really as does the globe on which we tread; and may, for aught we know to the contrary, exhibit objects and scenery, bearing no faint resemblance to those which we now behold. But whatever may be the nature of the objects, or the appearance of the scenery which may diversify the different parts of its surface, it will be a piece of materialism; and will be

the theatre of a higher and more glorious economy than any of those which have yet been connected with the history of our race.

To suppose, as some seem inclined to do, that redeemed men in the next stage of their existence, will be suspended in the sky, and permitted to float for ever in the aerial regions, without having some substratum on which to rest, some fixed locality, or permanent abode suited to their nature assigned to them, is absurd in the extreme, and utterly at variance with the revelations of scripture respecting the nature of their engagements and their pursuits. We read of "the land that is very far off"—"the kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world"—"a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God"—and of "new heavens and a new earth." Materialism—if the phrase may be allowed—pervades all these declarations. Indeed, the very language in which they are clothed is inseparably connected with the most substantial forms of matter; and the use of it leads us at once to conclude, that the place to which they relate, resembles, at least in its primary qualities, the solid frame-work of our earthly habitation. With respect to its secondary qualities, we can speak with less certainty; but it will, beyond doubt, be in every way worthy of God, and fitted to yield the highest gratification to its inhabitants.

The apostle John, who, with a prophetic eye, beheld a representation of the future abodes of the *righteous*, thus describes it:—"And I saw a new

heaven and a new earth : for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away ; and there was no more sea. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are passed away." Another inspired person, although he does not seem to have enjoyed the vision which John did, speaks of it, and employs language very much like what he used :—But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night ; in the which the heavens shall pass away with great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein shall be burnt up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness ; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwell the righteous." These intimations, although they do not convey to our minds an adequate conception of its grandeur and glory, throw a light on some circumstances connected with it, which may aid us in our inquiries into the subject. They intimate as ex-

plicitly as it is possible for language to do, that the material sphere of which we are speaking, and which is termed the "new earth," will appear immediately after the globe which we inhabit is dissolved; that the formation of such a place is expected by all christians; and that it will be the dwelling-place of righteousness.

Now, since it is foretold by the sacred writer, that "the heavens shall pass away," that "the elements shall melt with fervent heat," and that "the earth and the works that are therein shall be burnt up," it will be requisite to inquire before proceeding farther, what will be the nature of that predicted catastrophe. The questions which more particularly require to be solved, are such as the following:—Will the earth with its appendages be totally annihilated? Or will it merely undergo a change? And will the conflagration extend to other worlds besides our own? I am aware, many believe, that the earth will be utterly consumed and blotted out of existence; and that the devouring element will extend its destructive energies to the celestial regions, and involve sun, moon, and stars in one common ruin. This sentiment is cherished not only by persons whose conceptions of the greatness of the universe are extremely confused and defective; it is held by many of a different class, who avail themselves of it to impart a sort of colouring to the highly-wrought pictures they attempt to draw of the closing scenes of the history of our world. Dr. Young expresses it in the following

lines, which, though familiar, perhaps, to almost every one, it may not be improper to quote. When surveying the amplitude of the firmament, with the hosts of stars which meet the eye in every direction, he exclaims :—

“ How great, how firm, how sacred all appears !
 How worthy an immortal round of years !
 Yet all must drop, as autumn’s sickliest grain,
 And earth and firmament be sought in vain ;
 The track forgot where constellations shone,
 Or where the Stuart’s fill’d an awful throne.
 Time shall be slain, all nature be destroyed,
 Nor leave an atom in the mighty void.

* * * * *

This globe alone would but defraud the fire,
 Starve its devouring rage : the flakes aspire,
 And catch the clouds, and make the heav’ns their prey ;
 The sun, the moon, the stars, all melt away,
 All, all is lost ; no monument, no sign,
 Where once so proudly blaz’d the gay machine.”

The sounding phraseology of these couplets—and it is not more extravagant than much that has been penned by others—may be regarded as an indication of the notions which, to a great extent, prevail respecting the subject. But it is questionable if they are based upon any better foundation than a misconception of the import of some isolated texts of scripture. A slight examination of these will, perhaps, show that this is the case.

From a variety of observations and experiments which have been made, we have the strongest reason to conclude, that not one particle of the matter of

which the earth was originally composed has yet been annihilated ; but that every atom still exists, though not, perhaps, in the same state in which it was at the creation. The various tribes of living creatures, for instance, in the different stages of their existence, devour immense quantities of the productions of the earth, as well as of the flesh of other animals ; by combustion vast masses of materials of different kinds are consumed ; and, when vegetables die, they are, in appearance, utterly destroyed. In all these cases, however, not one particle of the substance of which they are composed is lost ; it only assumes different forms, and enters into new combinations. Since the time when the earth started into being at the fiat of the Almighty, changes have been perpetually taking place in some of its internal departments, as well as upon the whole extent of its surface. The masses of matter which, in different forms, are ejected from its bowels by volcanic eruptions, clearly show that there are causes in operation within which are capable, and indeed actually are, producing prodigious changes in its structure. But these are not greater nor more striking than are the transformations which are constantly taking place upon its surface, and which come more immediately under our cognizance. Such facts afford presumptive evidence, at least, that our world will not be annihilated by the general conflagration, however much it may be changed ; and they show, that the various combinations of matter may undergo *great and striking* transformations by combustion and

other processes, without being utterly destroyed ; and that, when subjected to the influence of the most potent agencies in nature, it resists them all, and loses nothing by any process through which it may be made to pass. I by no means assert, however, that matter is indestructible, or that it contains within itself any inherent principles of permanency independent of the will of the Creator. It was called into existence, and variously modified by him, for some wise and important ends ; and he could, if such were his pleasure, at any given moment, remand it into nihility. If it originally sprang out of nothing, there is no absurdity involved in the supposition, at least as far as the nature of matter itself is concerned, that it shall return to nothing ; it does not possess a necessary, independent existence. But while all this is granted, there seems to me to be good reason for believing that the universe shall be permanent ; that since it actually has been called into existence, it shall remain for ever.

The term which the apostle Peter employs to describe the effect of the general conflagration upon our globe, conveys the idea, not of annihilation, but simply of a decomposition, into their constituent parts, of the different materials subjected to the process of combustion. It indicates nothing more, therefore, than that the earth will be dissolved, and all the materials of which it is composed reduced to their original elements by the action of the fire. Nor is there any *reason to suppose* that the conflagration will ex-

tend beyond the atmosphere which surrounds it. There are none of the celestial bodies—the moon, perhaps, excepted—which has any connexion with the earth, or would be disturbed in the smallest degree though it were withdrawn beyond the range of solar influence, or blotted out of existence altogether. The planets, several of which are vastly larger than it, would still perform their revolutions round the central luminary, and continue to be the seats of life and intelligence as though no such catastrophe had taken place. Still less can we suppose that the vast bodies which are situated immeasurably beyond the limits of the planetary system, will be involved in the ruin, or the physical changes which await our globe in consequence of the sin of its inhabitants. Many millions of these bodies are discernible by the assistance of telescopes; and it is probable that an incalculably greater number are scattered over the remoter regions of the universe which the powers of vision cannot reach, even when assisted by the best instruments of human contrivance. The magnitude of the smallest of them is perhaps equal to that of our sun, whilst many of them may be vastly greater; and so distant are they from the sphere of our habitation, that a ray of light emitted from the nearest of them, proceeding at the rate of nearly two hundred thousand miles in one second of time—the rate at which light travels from the sun—it would require more than three years to reach the earth. *Besides*, if we reason from analogy, these are so many central luminaries, around which are revolving in-

numerable planetary worlds, each one of which may be the seat of a different dispensation and a different order of intelligent existence; and shall continue, perhaps, in the same circumstances, under the righteous government of the Most High, when the redemption of the human race, the resurrection of the dead, the general judgment, and the creation of the new heavens and the new earth shall have been long recorded as matters of history in the annals of eternity. Indeed, it would require evidence of no dubious character to make any one, who has at all reflected upon the greatness of the universe believe that the whole shall be overwhelmed in one common ruin at the last day, or be in any way affected by the destiny of our world.

The phraseology which the inspired apostle uses respecting the other parts of nature which shall be involved in the ruin which awaits the earth, does not appear to be in any measure inconsistent with the sentiment which I have expressed. He informs us that "the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved;" and that they "shall pass away with a great noise." Those who are acquainted with the peculiarities of scripture phraseology know, that the term "heavens" does not always denote the planetary and sidereal bodies which we see in the far distant regions of the universe; it very frequently occurs in a limited sense, and signifies simply the atmosphere which surrounds the earth. In no other case can we understand it when we read of "the fowls of heaven"—"the dew of heaven"—"the clouds of heaven"—and "the

winds of heaven." In the passage under consideration it is obviously used in this limited acceptance. It includes nothing more than that part of nature which is a necessary appendage of our globe, and which, along with it, was originally subjected to the curse. The conflagration, then, will be confined to our globe and the aerial fluid which floats around it; and though it will, by the intensity of its action, reduce the various substances of which they are composed to their elementary forms, the innumerable worlds which shine in other parts of space shall remain untouched, and continue to show forth the perfections of the Deity after the predicted changes in the physical constitution of our world shall have taken place.

The "dissolving of the heavens," or the decomposition of the atmosphere into its constituent parts, will—if we may judge from certain chemical experiments which have frequently been made—be accompanied by "a great noise," which shall shake creation to its centre, and immediately envelope every department of this mundane system in one devouring flame. But what scenes of sublimity and terror will that awful catastrophe unfold! The burning of a city, or the eruption of a volcano which sends forth tides of liquid fire, are objects at once grand and appalling; but what are they to the conflagration of a world! Yet he who deluged the earth by a flood of water, can, with equal ease, involve it in one common ruin by an agency of a *different* nature. He has but to let loose the latent

fire contained in the bowels of the earth, or to withdraw one of the component parts of the atmosphere, and leave the other to exert its energies uncontrolled, or to send forth a flame of that devouring element in which he and his mighty angels shall be enveloped when he comes to judgment, and the effect will, in a moment, be produced. And when he does that, the event will fully answer the description given of it by the sacred writer.

There are, however, some allusions made in scripture to that awful event, which seem to imply that the whole material universe, consisting of sun, moon, and stars, shall be involved in the destruction, and utterly annihilated. We find such expressions as the following:—"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken."* This language, although it contains an obvious allusion to the day of judgment, is allowed, by the most judicious commentators, to be a prophetic description of the final overthrow of the Jewish polity; and the figures employed in the description are similar to those which are used by eastern writers to describe political convulsions and the ruin of kingdoms. Such language and figures abound in the old testament prophecies:—"Behold, the day of the Lord cometh,

* Matt. xxiv. 29.

cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate ; and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. For the stars of heaven, and the constellations thereof, shall not give their light : the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine.”—“ All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll ; and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig-tree. For my sword shall be bathed in heaven : behold it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgement.”—“ The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining. The Lord shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem ; and the heavens and the earth shall shake.”* In all these instances, the language and figures are equally bold as those used by our Saviour ; but, in every instance, they refer to the infliction of divine judgments upon men, or to political revolutions in the nations of the earth.

But there are two other passages which are generally considered to be more explicit and decisive, and on that account they require a separate and more distinct notice. The one is in the hundredth and second psalm : —“ Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth ; and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They

* *Isaiah* xiii. 9, 10 ; xxxiv. 4, 5 ; *Joel* iii. 15, 16.

shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed." It is evident that the design of the sacred writer in this passage is to illustrate the eternity and immutability of Jehovah; and, for this purpose, he contrasts these attributes of his character with the mutable and perishing nature of all created things. The heavens and earth, though they are the most stable and permanent objects in nature, "shall be changed;" and that change will, at the appointed day, be effected by the Most High with as much ease as a person changes his garment and folds it up. This seems to be all that is affirmed by the psalmist; and it is a much more rational and consistent explanation of the language than to suppose that he foretels the annihilation of the heavens and the earth. But if it be insisted that the term "perish" conveys that meaning, I have only to reply, that similar language is used respecting what took place at the general deluge:—"By the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water. Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, *perished*." The continued existence of the earth is surely a proof sufficiently strong to convince even the most sceptical, that that fearful calamity did not reduce it to nihility; it only produced such a change in its structure and appearance, as fully to warrant the use of the term "perish" to express that change.

The other passage is in the twentieth chapter of the book of the Revelation :—" And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away ; and there was found no place for them." Doddridge makes the following judicious observation on this language :—" I cannot think this description intended to teach us any astronomical niceties ; it seems only to intimate, that all nature was thrown into strong commotion, as if it were incapable of sustaining the majestic presence that appeared." If this explanation be deemed unsatisfactory, may we not suppose it to mean, that the insufferable splendour of the divine presence will so completely eclipse the lustre of sun, moon, and stars, that they will instantly disappear and be utterly lost in the full blaze of uncreated Light ? And while it radiates from the midst of the throne upon the assembled multitudes who wait the decision of the Judge, the heavenly bodies and the globe on which we now dwell will be sought for in vain. The appearing glory of the Saviour will so affect the visual organs of those who shall be upon the earth at his coming, that they shall feel as if the universe was terrified at his presence and " fled away." An effect, in some degree resembling that is produced by the rising of the sun. When he emerges from beneath the horizon and ascends a cloudless sky, the stars, which before were shining with the greatest brilliancy, begin to disappear. They seem to recede, and in a very little while are utterly lost amid the splendours of the orb of day.

And if that luminary were suddenly to start up to the zenith, the incomparably greater brightness of his radiance would, in a moment, make all the other celestial bodies disappear from our view. Indeed, all the texts of scriptures which describe the dissolution of the heavens and the earth at the last day, are susceptible of a very easy and natural explanation, without supposing that the material universe will be annihilated, or that the conflagration will extend beyond the limits of our globe and its appendages.

In confirmation of this, it may be remarked that the sacred writers frequently assert the perpetuity of the heavenly bodies, and build the most important truths on their stability; so that if they were to be destroyed, the basis on which many of the divine promises rest would be removed. It is predicted, for example, respecting the Messiah and the duration of his reign :—" They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. His name shall endure for ever : his name shall be continued as long as the sun."—" His seed will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven." With respect to the spiritual seed of Abraham, the following declaration is made :—" Thus saith the Lord, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night ; if these ordinances depart from

before me, saith the Lord, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever." And the psalmist, when contemplating the character of Jehovah, thus calls upon universal nature to celebrate his perfections:—"Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light. Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens. Let them praise the name of the Lord: for he commanded, and they were created. He hath also established them for ever and ever."* This language—and more to the same purpose might be quoted—shows clearly enough, that the material universe is designed to endure throughout eternity; and that whatever changes may take place in particular parts of it, it shall, while the Great Eternal himself exists, continue to show forth his glory, and to be an object of delightful contemplation to intelligent beings.

The general analogies of nature and the language employed by the sacred writers, when describing the events connected with the consummation of all things, being such, we are warranted to conclude that the heavens and earth will not be annihilated. The structure of our globe, and, indeed, the whole of this mundane system will undergo an amazing transformation, and be completely freed from all the effects

* Psalm lxxii. 5, 17; lxxxix. 29, 36—37; Jeremiah xxxi. 35—36; Psalm cxlviii. 3—6.

of the curse. All that is impure and destructive in its present constitution will be removed ; and it is highly probable, nay, it is almost certain, that the pure elements to which it will be reduced, will enter into other combinations, and constitute the material frame-work of the new heavens and the new earth. It is true, it would be as easy for the Almighty to call into existence other heavens and another earth, as to purify and form anew those that at present exist ; but it is questionable if that would answer the purpose he has in view with respect to the human race as well as other orders of intelligent beings. The renovation of them after having been fearfully disarranged in consequence of the entrance of sin, will exhibit his glory in a striking manner, and may for ever be pointed to as the theatre on which the scheme of salvation was wrought out, and all the wonders of redeeming love displayed. And when that transformation is effected, the creation will exhibit a beauty and a loveliness surpassing by far what it exhibited when it came at first from the hand of the almighty Maker.

This, I apprehend, is something more than mere conjecture, It is based upon the sober verities of scripture. The apostle Paul seems evidently to have this subject in view when he says, in the eighth chapter of his epistle to the Romans :—" For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him

who hath subjected the same in hope ; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now ; and not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Without a critical explanation of the word which is rendered in the English Bible both " creature" and " creation," and in determining the meaning of which commentators have felt no small difficulty, one can scarcely fail to see, that there is in the passage a description of the present state of the world in consequence of the introduction of sin, and of a restoration for which it is waiting with ardent desire. It cannot be doubted that all the tribes of animated nature have been unwillingly subjected to suffering in consequence of the sin of man ; and by a bold and striking figure the inanimate creation also is represented as feeling the injury which has been done to it ; as deeply sensible of the degradation to which it has been subjected, as alive to its dishonour in being involuntary perverted to purposes diametrically opposite to those for which it was created, and as groaning under the superincumbent pressure of the curse. Every department of it experiences the effect of human transgression, and exhibits unequivocal indications of being under *the malediction of Heaven*. The ground, instead of

being fertile as it was in its pristine state, and every where yielding an abundance of all that is requisite for the support of animal life, spontaneously brings forth thorns and thistles ; and it refuses to yield to cultivation, however skilfully and industriously it may be conducted, what it did to the unassisted influence of a paradisiacal sky. Its mineral and vegetable productions, instead of being used to promote the comfort and convenience of man, are prostituted to unworthy purposes ; and are rendered subservient to the most destructive passions and the vilest lusts. There are latent fires imprisoned in its bowels which sometimes produce the most disastrous effects upon its surface. Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, thunderstorms, and tempests, are often experienced ; and they spread terror and destruction in the abodes of men. Such is the present state of the whole creation.

I do not, for obvious reasons, dwell upon the condition of the intelligent part of the creation, on account of whose sin the whole was deranged and perverted from its original purpose, I confine my remarks exclusively to that part of it which is represented as being “ made subject to vanity not willingly.” That, of course, cannot be the human family ; because, although involved in suffering, they brought it upon themselves by voluntarily rebelling against the Creator. It must, then—unless we adopt the preposterous and absurd notions entertained by some about the participation of the irrational animals in the expected

deliverance—be the inanimate creation, the material frame-work of our earthly habitation. It, during the happy period of primeval innocence, exhibited all that is fair and lovely in divine workmanship, and was a specimen of creative wisdom which attracted the attention and excited the admiration of the sons of God in other spheres of existence. It is now, however, in a state of the deepest degradation, and is groaning under the yoke which has been imposed upon it. But it is to be “delivered from the bondage of corruption;” and—as the passion of desire is ascribed to it, the figure being still kept up—it is looking and longing for that deliverance with “earnest expectation.”

We need, surely, be at no loss to understand the nature of that deliverance when we consider what “the bondage of corruption” is, or the “subjection to vanity,” which is the same thing. It will consist in the entire removal of the curse; in their restoration to their original use—the promotion of the divine glory—of all the departments of nature; and in making creation appear, what it in reality will be, a world “wherein dwelleth righteousness.” It is evident, however, from the fearfully deranged state in which it at present is, that some mighty physical change must take place in its structure and constitution before the expected deliverance can be effected. Although a partial improvement shall be realized in the earth, with respect to its fertility and the *salubrity* of its air, during the period of millennial

glory, when the principles of true religion shall universally prevail, that will come far short of "the expectation of the creation;" it will come far short of the promised deliverance. Indeed, I cannot conceive that anything less is intended by the sacred writer, in the passage under consideration, than the change which shall take place throughout every department of this mundane system at the consummation of all things. That, and that alone, will be the means of removing, totally and for ever, all the physical evils under which the earth groans, and of realizing fully its longing anticipations; and it may be regarded as the ultimate fulfilment of the ancient prediction:—

"Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people; and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying." How glorious will this renovated earth then appear! How well fitted to be the habitation of sinless creatures! No thunder-cloud nor pestilential vapour shall then hover above those abodes of happiness and peace; no howling, desolating storms shall disturb the serenity of the sky; no earthquakes nor volcanic eruptions shall be experienced any more; no noxious animals nor beasts of prey shall annoy the blessed inhabitants; but the ground, freed from the malediction of heaven, shall be clothed with un-

fading beauty, and the genial influence of an eternal spring shall everywhere be felt.

This view of the subject is in perfect harmony with what is said respecting the time at which the expected deliverance will be realized. That time is called "the manifestation of the sons of God." It is, I believe, admitted by almost all, whatever views they may entertain about the import and bearing of the whole passage, that "the manifestation of the sons of God," in the highest sense of the phrase, is the time when the righteous shall be raised from the grave to enter upon the full enjoyment of the promised inheritance. It is said:—"And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." It is true, that at the period when the glory of the latter day shall rise upon the earth, "the sons of God" shall emerge from their depressed condition, and take possession of "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom, under the whole heaven," and shall enjoy a season of blessed and "glorious liberty;" for Satan, "the prince of the power of the air" shall be cast down, and the cause of Christ universally triumphant. That, however, will not be their full manifestation. It consists in something unspeakably more glorious; and it will not be effected till they shall be freed from the trammels of mortality; till the material part of their nature shall be emancipated from the prison-house of death; till,

on the morning of the resurrection, they shall be owned by the Saviour, and publicly presented to the Father in their redeemed state, "without spot and blameless." That will be the consummation of their hopes; that "the glory which shall be revealed."

But the expected deliverance of the inanimate creation "from the bondage of corruption" will be contemporaneous with that event. Both will take place at the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. At that time the earth, which "was made subject to vanity, not willingly," on account of the sin of man, will participate in "the glorious liberty of the children of God." But, surely, it will not do that by being utterly destroyed, but by undergoing, in the hand of the infinite Intelligence, a transformation which shall completely rectify all its physical derangements, and restore it to the grand purpose for which it was originally made.

Since, then, we are warranted to conclude from the intimations of the scripture upon the subject, that the heavens and the earth will not be annihilated at the last day, but that they will undergo a change—a change so great, indeed, as to justify the use of the language respecting it, "behold, I make all things new"—to what purpose, it may be asked, will they be applied? Will they remain unoccupied, as objects of contemplation to the surrounding universe? Or, will they be inhabited by an order of beings called into existence for the purpose? Or, will they be the

abodes, either permanent or occasional, of redeemed men after the resurrection?

To the first of these questions there need be little hesitancy in giving a reply in the negative, as it is improbable, in the highest degree, that a place of such surpassing loveliness and grandeur as the new earth will be, shall remain unoccupied; that there will be no intelligent beings located there to admire the varied beauties and sublimity of its scenery, and to enjoy the pleasure which the contemplation of them will yield. But this is not the only consideration which renders it improbable. A sacred writer says, "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." This language not only implies that "there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie;" it implies that it will be the residence of intelligent and holy beings. The abstract term "righteousness" is evidently used for the concrete—a figure of speech by no means uncommon in the scriptures—and must be understood to be descriptive of the moral character of its inhabitants. It could not with any propriety be used to describe the physical qualities of a place. Although, in the new creation, there may be a display of the Creator's power, in its being decorated with all that is grand and sublime in nature; and although it may exhibit marks of infinite wisdom in its design and in the harmonious adjustment of its parts; yet, *if solitude* universally reigned in it, it could not be

said respecting it, "wherein dwelleth righteousness." This may be regarded as an intimation of the fact sufficiently clear, that the new earth which shall be formed out of the wreck of the present mundane system, will be inhabited by a race of holy intelligences ; that it will be a sphere on which the principles of righteousness shall be developed.

But the question still recurs : What race of beings will they be ? I feel no hesitancy in avowing my belief that they will be redeemed men ; and that belief is built, mainly, upon the promise to which the apostle Peter alludes :—" Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." The promise, whatever one we may suppose him to have more particularly in view, must have been made to the people of God ; and it was evidently pointed at to sustain and comfort them when contemplating the awful scenes which shall be exhibited at the day of the Lord. He, by reminding them of that promise, taught them to " look for new heavens and a new earth," not simply as an additional manifestation of creative energy, but as a sphere on which their powers should be exercised in their redeemed state. Unless it was for that purpose, we cannot conceive what end the allusion to the promise would have answered. But the allusion to it in such circumstances seems to me to leave very little, if any doubt upon the subject, and to point out the use to which the new creation is to be put. Indeed, it is mentioned in many parts of scripture as the

habitation of righteous men, as the place where they shall enjoy the full fruition of the hopes which they cherished upon earth. And it will, in every respect, be suited to the purpose. When we attempt to conceive of the grandeur and glory of it, our minds are completely overwhelmed. It far exceeds the most elevated conceptions of it which we can at present form. We may think of the earthly paradise, and reflect with pleasure upon the beauty of its scenery, the richness of its fruits, and the variety of objects in it fitted to please the imagination and yield the purest gratification; but it is only a faint emblem of the place which shall be the abode of the righteous after the resurrection. No seducing serpent shall be permitted to enter within its precincts, nor shall the flaming sword obstruct the way of the tree of life. "The gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there. And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

But it, perhaps, may be objected: Although the earth were entirely purified and formed anew by the hand of the Creator; and though it were decorated with all that is splendid and magnificent; yet if it formed a part of the system to which it at present belongs—a circumstance which seems necessarily connected with the view of the subject which I have been exhibiting—the succession of day and night, the *revolution* of the seasons, and the different degrees of

temperature in different regions upon its surface, are circumstances which do not correspond with the inspired descriptions which are given of the place in which the future life of redeemed men will run its course.

I may here mention, that all the descriptions of the heavenly state which are contained in the scriptures are clothed in language borrowed from earthly things ; and as the descriptions are, for the most part, of a negative character, the sacred writers introduce circumstances which are felt to be productive of evil, and inform us, that such things shall have no place in the new heavens and the new earth. They cannot, for obvious reasons, tell us what sort of a place the future abode of the righteous is, they tell us only what it is not ; and when they do attempt to speak upon the subject in positive language, they employ emblems selected from among the material objects with which we are acquainted. This consideration alone, goes a great way to obviate the objection ; and, if properly reflected upon, would tend to correct the vague and erroneous conceptions which many entertain respecting the heavenly state. But the circumstances which form the grounds of the objection may be much modified in the new heavens and the new earth. And it is by no means difficult to conceive how this can be done.

The constitution of the globe itself, its relative position, and the component parts of the atmosphere, may all be vastly different from what they are at

present ; and a change in any, or all of these, might produce effects of the most wonderful description. Not only might the days, and nights, and seasons of the year be changed ; the heavens as well as the surface of the earth might assume a very different aspect from that which they now wear. And who can doubt that the Creator is possessed of power to effect such changes, or wisdom to arrange them in such a manner as to render them conducive to the comfort and happiness of the redeemed. The planet Saturn, for instance, is surrounded with a splendid assemblage of rings and moons, which may produce a diversified appearance far surpassing in grandeur that produced by the light of the sun ; and it cannot be doubted, that these magnificent appendages of that celestial body are designed to promote the comfort, and minister to the enjoyment of its inhabitants. The present constitution of nature is in every way suited to our circumstances, and there is a remarkable adaptation in our senses to the objects of sensation around us ; and can we imagine for a moment, when we consider the wisdom and vast resources of the Most High, that he will not rear a fabric worthy of himself, and suited to the circumstances of its inhabitants ? His creative energies are infinite, and he can so transform and decorate this globe as to make it correspond with the most glowing and sublime descriptions of the future abodes of the righteous which are contained in the inspired volume.

It may be requisite to advert for a moment to the question which some, perhaps, may be disposed to put:—What relation will the new heavens and the new earth have to the place where the throne of the Eternal is situated, and where he, in a particular manner, manifests his glory?

That there is such a place in the universe cannot be doubted. Besides the peculiar designations which are applied to it in scripture, it is frequently alluded to as the place where the glorified human nature of the Saviour now is, and where he is carrying on his ministrations as the High Priest of our profession. Being the palace of the great King, we must conceive of it as a place where all that is grand and magnificent in nature is concentrated. Nothing within the illimitable range of creation can be compared with it. Its glory must be transcendent beyond description, since it is the place in which Jehovah is pleased to unveil his presence, and to show himself to the celestial beings who are permitted to approach his seat. Whatever may be the magnificence of its structure, and however much it may be beautified by infinite wisdom and almighty power, his presence imparts to it a surpassing glory. Were the light of ten thousand suns all concentrated, it would be darkness itself when compared with the insufferable splendour which surrounds his throne. What its magnitude and extent may be, we cannot tell; but it is probable that the countless worlds in the firmament within the reach of our vision are the mere outworks of creation, and that,

were they all put together, they would bear but a small proportion to the magnitude of that high and holy place.

Dr. Dick, in his *Philosophy of a Future State*, says respecting it: "There is an astronomical idea which may help us to form some conception of the 'glorious high throne' which is the peculiar residence of the Eternal. It is now considered by astronomers as highly probable, if not certain, from late observations, from the nature of gravitation, and other circumstances, that all the systems of the universe revolve round one common centre, and that this centre may bear as great a proportion, in point of magnitude, to the universal assemblage of systems, as the sun does to the surrounding planets. And, since our sun is five hundred times larger than the earth and all the other planets and the satellites taken together, on the same scale such a central body would be five hundred times larger than all the systems and worlds in the universe. Here, then, may be a vast universe of itself, an example of material creation exceeding all the rest in magnitude and splendour, and in which are blended the glories of every other system. If this is in reality the case, it may, with most emphatic propriety, be termed *the throne of God*."

This conjecture—for it is not to be considered as a positive assertion—may, perhaps, appear extravagant to those whose conceptions of Jehovah's works are comparatively limited and obscure, and whose range of thought is bounded by the limits of the globe on

which they dwell, or at most by the system of which it forms a part; but it corresponds with the general analogies of nature, and is in the highest degree probable when viewed in connexion with the greatness and majesty of the Most High. The holy scriptures, which are the test by which our views of this subject are to be tried, contain the most sublime descriptions of the divine Being, and lead us to form exalted conceptions of "the place where his honour dwelleth." He is represented as dwelling "in the light which no man can approach unto;" as having "prepared his throne in the heavens;" as sitting "upon the circle of the earth;" stretching "out the heavens as a curtain," and "spreading them out as a tent to dwell in;" and as "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity." From such representations we may rest assured that the magnificence and splendours of that place immeasurably transcend all imagination; and that, when the curtain is drawn aside which at present conceals it from our view, the sight will produce the most rapturous emotions. The glory of these outer departments of nature, however great, cannot for a moment be compared with it; for in that mighty *centre* of the universe all that is grand and glorious in creation will be displayed. And the contemplation of it has a tendency to elevate our minds as well as to enlarge our conceptions of that great Being who formed it, and hath chosen it for his habitation.

I am aware that the scriptures generally represent the abodes of the righteous as being in the place

where the throne of God is ; or, at least, that the language used respecting these abodes implies, that the redeemed have access to the throne of God at all times. The notion I have advanced, when properly considered, is by no means opposed to any statement of scripture upon the subject. And, supposing this earth, after it is renovated, to be the residence of the redeemed, they would neither be excluded from the immediate presence of God, nor exiled from the society of angels ; nor would their enjoyment on that account be in the slightest degree diminished. Although the glorified humanity of the Saviour cannot be in every place at the same time, there will, no doubt, constantly be within their view some bright manifestation of the divine glory to attract their eye, and to banish evil of every description from their habitation. The spiritual presence of the Most High will be always with them, diffusing comfort and joy through their souls, unfolding his character to them, and leading them to sources of the purest and most satisfying pleasure. If the Lord God walked in the garden of Eden, and, in a visible form, held communion with our first parents while they were in a state of innocence, may we not suppose that he will confer as high an honour upon the redeemed in the celestial paradise, and visit them in the abodes of innocence and peace which he himself shall prepare ?

But there is no reason to suppose that they shall for ever be confined to the new earth, although it be *the place of their abode*. After they are invested with

glorified bodies they shall become denizens of the universe, and be enabled to trace the displays of infinite wisdom and almighty power in the numberless worlds which lie within the range of Jehovah's empire. Some of the ministering spirits who stand before the throne of God, have, on various occasions, found their way through the trackless regions of the sky to our world; and it cannot be questioned that, when fulfilling the commands of the Most High, they take more distant flights; and fly, with inconceivable swiftness, and unerring precision, to those worlds which lie at the utmost limits of our vision, and to many others far beyond them. The future bodies of the redeemed may be as highly etherialized as the corporeal vehicles of these celestial beings—for I conceive it to be in the highest degree probable that they are invested with a material organization of some sort—and that they may be so formed as to be suitable instruments for conveying themselves from world to world with a velocity equal to that with which angels move. In that case they will be able, in a very short space of time, to transport themselves to that part of the universe where the throne of God is, or even to remoter spheres where there are other orders of holy intelligences. Now, since every impediment, both of a moral and physical nature, which would prevent their having access to the habitation of the Eternal, will be removed; and since they will be able to wing their way to that glorious place with unconceivable rapidity; may it not with propriety be said respect-

ing them, in these circumstances, that they dwell in the presence of God, and that they are before his throne.

Such powers and capabilities, it is highly probable, are possessed by the holy intelligences who dwell in other worlds, and who, as subjects of the same divine government under which we live, may have to visit, on some grand public occasion, the special residence of the Great Supreme. The apostle Paul tells us that "by him"—that is, by Christ—"were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." And he further informs us, that it is the design of God the Father to unite the celestial beings and redeemed sinners into one body:—"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth." When the mysteries of redemption are finished, that union shall be apparent, and its delightful consequences experienced; and all orders of holy beings in the universe will be governed by the law of love, and live together in the bonds of a holy brotherhood for ever.

Now, who will be so confident as to assert, that throughout the revolving cycles of eternity there will *not* be seasons corresponding to our earthly sabbaths, *in which* the servants of the Most High from the

remotest limits of the universe shall assemble round his throne to behold his glory; to pay their homage to him and to learn his will; and to engage in peculiar acts of worship for the purpose of commemorating, in some impressive and glorious manner, the all-important work in virtue of which the intelligent universe is united together under the headship of Christ? * The language of the poet, when describing the assembling of the hosts of heaven at the day of judgment, may be considered as a representation of

* It appears to me, that the sacred writer suggests some such notion as this in the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, when speaking of the privileges and prospects of Christians:—"But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." The particular in the enumeration to which I refer, is the one which stands first in the twenty-third verse. The Greek word *πανεγυρις*, which is translated "the general assembly," properly signifies, a stated convention upon some joyful occasion, such as a religious festival; and I should be disposed to think, that it denotes something different from the convention of the numbers of "the church of the first-born." That holy community consists of redeemed men; the "innumerable company of angels" are the ministering spirits who wait around the throne of God; and "the general assembly" seems to be a concourse of all the holy intelligences in the empire of Jehovah. If such be the import of the passage, what a grand idea does it convey!

what will, in all probability, often take place in the future scenes of our existence :—

“ Nor yet from heaven
 Alone, came they that day. The worlds around,
 Or neighbouring nearest on the verge of night
 Emptied, sent forth their whole inhabitants.
 All tribes of being came, of every name,
 From every coast, filling Jehovah's courts.
 From morn till mid-day in the squadrons poured
 Immense, along the bright celestial roads,
 Swiftly they rode, for love unspeakable,
 To God, and to Messiah, Prince of Peace,
 Drew them, and made obedient haste to be
 Approved. And now, before the throne of the Eternal
 Brighter, that day, than when the Son prepared
 To overthrow the seraphim rebelled,—
 And circling round the mount of Deity,
 Upon the sea of glass all round about,
 And down the borders of the stream of life,
 And over all the plains of paradise,
 For many a league of heavenly measurement,—
 Assembled, stood the immortal multitude,
 Millions above all number infinite,
 The nations of the blest.
 Thus stood they numberless around the Mount
 Of presence ; and adoring, waited, hushed
 In deepest silence, for the voice of God.”

If such scenes shall be realized—and we have every reason to believe that they will—redeemed men shall appear in the habitation of the divine glory along with other orders of beings in far distant worlds ; and shall be invested with material vehicles which will not, *in the smallest degree*, impede their movements while

traversing the boundless expanse to the dwelling-place of the Great Supreme.

What a grand and glorious prospect ! How well fitted to raise our minds to the contemplation of the realities of eternity ! The palace of the King of kings will be constantly open for the reception of his subjects ; and we may rest assured, that the Lamb who dwells in the midst of the throne will most cordially welcome those who have been redeemed by his precious blood, and will point out to them all the splendours of that holy place. He shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters ; and shall make to them such discoveries of the divine character as will produce joy unspeakable and full of glory. And, oh ! what rapturous emotions will fill their souls, when they revisit the scene of their trials and afflictions, and recount the tokens of the Saviour's love ! The recollection of the sorrows and woes which they there endured will impart a zest to their pleasures, and make them more highly admire the grace which effected such a change in their circumstances.

CHAPTER V.

ON THE ENJOYMENTS OF MEN IN THEIR REDEEMED STATE.

THE apostle Paul informs us, that when he was caught up to the third heavens, " he heard unspeakable words, which it is not possible for a man to utter." In these realms of glory and immortality he saw the throne of the Eternal, and multitudes of angels and spirits of just men made perfect standing around it; and he listened to their song of praise. But though he was dazzled by the splendour of their appearance, and enraptured by the melodious sounds of the language in which they expressed their thoughts and feelings, he could not find words to convey to the minds of men upon earth a conception of the objects which he saw, and the sounds which he heard. Indeed, no adequate description of the heavenly state can be given, because human language is incapable of conveying to others any ideas but such as arise from the operations of the mind while it is connected with the body, and those which are produced by the objects of sensation; it is altogether unsuited to the objects with which spiritual beings are conversant in other and higher spheres of existence.

When the sacred writers describe its blessedness

they generally employ emblems selected from earthly things. They represent it by the figure of "treasure which neither moth nor rust doth corrupt." They speak of it as "the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"—as "a crown of righteousness"—"a crown of glory"—"an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away"—and as "a kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world." These figures, although taken from objects which, in the estimation of men, are invested with all that is grand and glorious, fall infinitely short of what they are intended to represent. They bear no closer a resemblance to it than does the faint light of a twinkling star to the bright radiance of the noon-day sun. But when they give a negative description of heaven, or contrast it with the present state of imperfection and suffering and death, they place it more fully before the mind, and render it a more striking and impressive object of contemplation. Respecting the community whose place of residence it is, they say:—"the sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."—"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things

are passed away." These expressions, although descriptive of what heaven is not, rather than of what it is, are designed to make us conceive of it as the dwelling-place of pure, satisfying, eternal happiness. They comprehend, indeed, everything which can be desired ; everything which can be enjoyed in a state of perfection by intelligent beings.

It will be requisite, however, to descend to particulars ; and, if possible, to trace that happiness to the various sources whence it springs. This may enable us to form a somewhat more definite conception of its nature, and excite us to greater diligence in the cultivation of the dispositions and habits requisite to the enjoyment of it.

First, Redeemed men shall be completely exempted from the effects of the curse.

" There shall be no more curse." This is mentioned by the apostle John as one of the circumstances which places heaven, as a sphere of existence, immeasurably above this earth, and which renders it so desirable. It was the curse which originally spread an universal blight over this fair creation ; and it continues to fill the habitations of men with suffering and woe. Look for a moment at the awful terms of the threatening :—" Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception : in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children ; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast

hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it : cursed is the ground for thy sake ; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life : Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee ; and thou shalt eat of the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground : for out of it wast thou taken : for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

Keeping out of view altogether, at present, that part of it which relates to the state of the soul after the infliction of death—although that is beyond all comparison the more fearful—how much evil does it entail upon the human family in this life ! In consequence of the baneful influence which it has shed over the earth, men are subjected to incessant toil in order to sustain life ; and they experience, in all their endlessly diversified forms, the inconveniences and pains which necessarily follow it. Although they were formed for activity, and were so constituted as to derive their highest enjoyment from the vigorous exercise of their faculties, the kind and the degree of labour to which they are doomed in consequence of sin, not only interfere with the high and noble pursuits which would have occupied their attention had they continued in a sinless state—they are the immediate cause of a vast amount of positive suffering. Exhaustion and weariness and fatigue are almost daily felt ; and, in the great majority of instances, there is no respite enjoyed from the servile drudgery till they

are consigned to the house appointed for all living. "There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary are at rest."

That, however, is but a small part of the evil. The curse has brought along with it a dark retinue of cares and anxieties and fears; and these have cast a cheerless gloom over the path of life, and neutralized all earthly enjoyments. There are few things which are found to be more inimical to happiness than uncertainty and solicitude, and the forebodings of real or imaginary calamities. Yet who that has run the ordinary course of human life is a stranger to them, or is incapable of telling from experience the painful effect which they have upon the mind! The causes which produce them are universally in operation, and, while they exist, men will continue to be the subjects of the most distressing emotions.

Besides, there is an incalculable amount of evil experienced in consequence of the universal reign of death. It is not, however, by a mere surface view of society that we can form a conception of its magnitude, or of the diversified ways in which it affects mankind. We must take a more minute survey, and contemplate an individual case. And how inexpressibly painful is the scene! When you enter the chamber of the sufferer, and reflect on all the circumstances of his condition, both personal and relative, you are completely overwhelmed. The emaciated frame, worn out by disease; the pallid countenance, *in which* are visible the lineaments of death; the faint,

inarticulate accents, which show that the power of speech has failed; the feebly-beating pulse, and the restlessness and anxiety of the sufferer, all indicate that the spirit is about to quit its house of clay. The individual is agonized, not merely by the pains and struggles of expiring nature, but by the contemplation of the awful realities which are before him. Every tie which bound him to earth is about to be dissolved; his disembodied spirit is about to enter the invisible world; the judgment-seat with its momentous associations seems already in view; and the anticipation of the solemn interview which he must have with the Great Eternal, fill his mind with the deepest awe.

But there are other circumstances to be considered. If he is the head of a numerous, dependent family, what a spectacle does his dwelling present! It is impossible to witness the closing scene without emotion. You see the affectionate relatives standing round the couch, anxiously waiting the changes that are taking place upon their departing friend, and struggling to suppress the deep emotion with which their breasts are agitated. You see the hapless mother, under the influence of undying affection, summoning up all her fortitude to have the last interview with the sharer of her joys and sorrows; and to hear him, ere his lips are sealed in death, pronounce the last, the long farewell. You see the sobbing children, one after another, conducted to his bedside to receive a blessing; and you hear the dying parent labouring for utterance to consign the objects of his tender affection to the God

of the fatherless. But no sooner is life extinct than you see the disconsolate widow, and her orphan children round about her, agonized with grief, "refusing to be comforted." Now, if all that suffering is occasioned by the death of one individual only, who can estimate the extent and magnitude of the evil experienced by the human race, when thousands, sustaining all the varied relations of life, are dying every day ! Death breaks asunder the tenderest ties, it dissolves the most endearing friendships ; and, as long as it continues its ravages, the body will not be free from pain, nor the mind from apprehension and grief.

As we have, by observation and experience, been so familiarized with these things, we cannot well conceive what the nature of our feelings would be in a state where they are unknown. Our highest and purest pleasures upon earth are so much modified by them, that there is no part of our sublunary existence that can furnish experience, by which we can accurately judge of what our experience would be, were we completely delivered from the effects of the curse. We only know, that when such is the case, our happiness will be immeasurably augmented, and everything removed which is fitted to give annoyance and pain. Although, in the higher sphere of human existence, when the present order of things shall be completely changed, the redeemed will perpetually exercise their enlarged and renovated powers ; they will experience no weariness nor fatigue ; they will *be strangers* to anxiety and fear and sorrow ; and will

be distressed with pain no more for ever. There, there will be no deathbed scenes witnessed, no funeral processions, no sepulchres, no signs of sorrow, and no mourners shall go about the streets. God himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

Were a change now to take place upon our world, which would bring it back to a state similar to that in which it was before the entrance of sin, and were every vestige of suffering completely removed, it would be unspeakably more desirable as a place of residence; and the circumstances of men would be improved to an inconceivable extent. Yet, though all that were effected, and the delightful scene now to burst upon our view, and we ourselves made partakers, to the full extent, of the happiness which would prevail throughout the creation, we should even then be in circumstances vastly inferior to the circumstances in which the righteous shall be placed in the heavenly state. But in order to form a proper conception of the happiness which shall result from the removal of the curse, we must wait till the predicted changes take place in the constitution of our earth, and see the Creator fulfil the delightful promise, long since made—"Behold, I make all things new."

Secondly, They shall constantly behold the full manifestation of the divine glory.

To beings who are perfectly holy and possessed of high capabilities of enjoyment, that will be a source

of the purest and most exquisite pleasure ; and it is regarded, by the people of God upon earth, as one of the things which will largely contribute to their happiness in the next stage of their existence :—" As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness : I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness."—" It doth not yet appear what we shall be : but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is."—In the future abode of the righteous, there will not simply be experienced the gracious influences of the Being whose spiritual presence and controlling agency pervade the universe ; there will be some visible and impressive display of his presence which will be the object of delightful contemplation, and which will indicate that he is more immediately present in that favoured place. The light which no man can approach unto, in the present state, shall shine forth in all its splendour upon the redeemed ; and they will be permitted to dwell in it for ever. What may be the form or the appearance of the glory which shall be manifested, we cannot tell ; nor can we form any notion of the way in which it will affect the mind. Of this one fact, however, we are certain, that the contemplation of it will be productive of the highest enjoyment, and will be a powerful means of carrying them forward in the career of intellectual and spiritual improvement.

A few of its rays were, in former ages, occasionally seen even in this world. They were beheld by Moses *on mount Sinai* and in the tabernacle ; by some of

prophets when they were under an immediate
 tus of the Holy Spirit; by the shepherds on the
 is of Bethlehem at the advent of the Saviour;
 by the disciples on the mount at the transfigura-
 . But even the faintest radiations of the Un-
 ted Light were overpowering. They filled the
 olders with dread, and, in some instances, almost
 ived those who beheld them of the power of
 king and acting. And similar effects will always
 roduced on beings whose spiritual vision is too
 k for such insufferable splendour, and whose con-
 asness of guilt makes them dread to come into
 unveiled presence of the Holy One. But, in the
 re state, redeemed men will experience no such
 ngs. Their organs will be adapted to the objects
 ision, and they will be able to fix them upon the
 blaze of the divine glory without uneasiness or
 . They will have no guilt to fill them with ap-
 ension; there will be nothing within them to
 ent their immediate approach to the throne of the
 nal; and their happiness will be complete when
 feel themselves in the presence-chamber of the
 t High, and permitted to hold uninterrupted fel-
 ship with him.

Then that visible manifestation of the presence of
 y is displayed, it will immeasurably increase our
 vledge of his character, and correct all the mis-
 eptions which we had formed of it. At present,
 understanding is darkened by sin, our compre-
 ion is limited, and what knowledge of the divine

character we possess, is the result of much labour and patient investigation. In tracing the attributes displayed in the works of creation, and in the scheme of redemption, difficulties meet us at every step of our progress. And not only is our knowledge on that account circumscribed, it is, in many cases, mingled with error. We see but darkly as through a glass, so that a very imperfect conception of the great Being to whom these attributes belong is conveyed to our minds. But in the celestial world it will be far otherwise. There the glory of the divine character will be so conspicuous, and the powers of the saints so enlarged, that they will be fully able to comprehend many things which are now enveloped in uncertainty or impenetrable mystery. And, perhaps, the way in which they shall acquire their knowledge will more nearly resemble intuition, than the doubtful and laborious method by which they, at present, arrive at their conclusions. "They shall know even as also they are known." Every obstructing medium will be entirely removed; and when the glory of unerring wisdom, boundless goodness, almighty power, eternal truth, inflexible justice, and spotless holiness, shines forth and pours its rays into the minds of the redeemed, it will produce consummate pleasure. It will fill them with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Besides, it will tend to render the lineaments of the divine image, which are impressed upon them in this world, more marked and conspicuous. "They *shall* be like him, for they shall see him as he is."

less they bear a complete resemblance to him, the contemplation of his glory can yield them no satisfaction. Its pure spiritual light is not their natural element; it is uncongenial to depraved minds. They must, therefore, be renewed in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, and all their affections properly disposed by a superior Agency, before they can derive unmingled pleasure from it. When that work is done, the repellent principles of their nature are in measure destroyed, and the elements of the character are formed which are to be perfected in a higher sphere of existence. And "while beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, they are changed into the same image from glory to glory." But if the faint emanations of it, now beheld, are so efficacious, may we not expect that its full splendour will be unspeakably more so? The light of the sun does not more effectually dissipate the shades of night, and clothe creation with loveliness, than shall the appearing glory of God remove all impurity and darkness from the soul, and clothe it with light and all the beauties of holiness. A sight of his majesty, his purity, and his love, puts the soul into the most happy state, and impresses upon it the intelligible impress of his moral affections.

Such a complete resemblance to God will not only increase their happiness, it may be said to be the very essence of happiness itself. "I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness." That satisfaction, obviously, will arise from the consciousness of hav-

ing completely recovered from the disease of sin; and from the experience of a full, uninterrupted flow of spiritual health. They shall be all-glorious within; they shall be without spot and blameless. With what delightful emotions will they, in these circumstances, contemplate the glory of God! And as they advance in the knowledge of his perfections, they will gaze upon it with more intense interest, and still continue to rise in the scale of intelligence, through an endless duration. It will also irradiate their habitation, and shed a heavenly lustre on all the material objects by which they shall be surrounded, and prove a sure defence against the approach of moral evil in any of its forms.

Thirdly, Their social affections will be perfected and brought into full operation.

That will be productive of pleasure of the purest and most satisfying kind. Solitude, indeed, is uncongenial to the nature of man. He would be miserable were he doomed to dwell alone. The social affections were originally implanted in his breast by the Creator; and they are a source of the highest earthly enjoyment. But they are now debased by sin, and are tainted with the general corruption of our nature. Men, instead of being influenced by love and benevolence in their intercourse with others, manifest the evil propensities which have been generated by sin. They are, by nature, "full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, without natural

affection, implacable, unmerciful." These dark and destructive passions have filled the habitations of men with strife and misery, and transformed the world itself into a field of warfare and blood. The principle of love to God and man was completely destroyed when man lost his original innocence; and it must be restored and perfected in order to the full enjoyment of perfect felicity. It is the principal element, indeed, of genuine happiness; and in as far as it is possessed, it elevates the subject of it in the scale of moral excellence. Although it is produced in the minds of men by the Holy Spirit, when they believe the gospel, it will always be imperfect in this world; because the opposite principles will not be entirely eradicated while they are invested with a body of sin and death. But it cannot lie in a dormant state. It is an active principle, which all the changes of life cannot neutralize, and which death cannot destroy. While cherished by communications from above, it waxes stronger and stronger; and it will operate in full vigour in the heavenly world. Selfishness, which is the bane of fraternal intercourse and social concord, cannot subsist in the mind where perfect love holds the sway. In that case, it will be banished for ever from the future abodes of redeemed men. There, perfect love shall rule in every mind. And whilst it will keep them near to God, and tune their harps to celebrate his praise, it will also keep them together in the bonds of a holy brotherhood through all eternity. In such a society as that there

will be ample scope for the exercise of the social affections ; and there will be no contrariety of feeling, and no mere individual interests to secure.

But the servants of God, while they remain upon earth, enjoy foretastes of that pleasure. Being united to Christ their common head, they regard his followers as members of the same body, and cherish towards them feelings of fraternal affection. Those who bear his image and breathe his spirit, they esteem as the excellent of the earth. When they take sweet counsel together, and converse with each other about the things which belong to their peace, their hearts are enlarged, and the most delightful emotions excited. With such they desire to dwell. In the reciprocal exercise of sympathy, in the mutual interchange of kind offices, in their joint acts of devotion, and in sitting around the communion table, they enjoy a happiness similar to that of the spirits of just men made perfect. Sometimes, indeed, in the fellowship of the saints, when they are favoured with a more than ordinary manifestation of the divine presence, and a more lively representation of the glories of heaven than what they have formerly beheld, they feel inclined to use the language which the disciples used on the mount of transfiguration—" Lord, it is good for us to be here." But, in these circumstances, though one in spirit with all the household of faith, their joys are mingled with the imperfections of their nature ; and their holy affections are checked in their exercise by the sinful passions which are still unsub-

duced. When they are introduced, however, into the society of heaven, their affections will be perfected, and every obstruction to their exercise fully and for ever removed. And who can describe the joys which they shall experience when they "shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven;" and find themselves surrounded by an innumerable multitude which have been redeemed from among men! They will not be among strangers, nor feel the restraint which is generally imposed upon men when introduced into new society: they will be in the midst of brethren whose feelings and sympathies and joys are similar to their own. They shall see and converse with the individuals, of whose faith and patience they have read in the scriptures; and be regarded as friends by patriarchs and prophets and apostles, and the host of martyrs of whom the world was not worthy. And there can be no question, that the myriads of holy intelligences, who belong to other spheres of existence, will form part of the great community; and that their feelings and sentiments and language and pursuits will be so assimilated to those of redeemed men, that they will be able to hold intercourse with them. And what interesting and wondrous narratives will they communicate respecting the works and the dispensations of the Most High, in the different parts of the universe to which they belong! The enjoyment of such society will be the very consummation of happiness.

Some of the most enlightened heather, although

their notions of a future state were very obscure, considered that its highest pleasure would be derived from the society of the wise and virtuous men who lived in this world; and they seem to have cherished the notion, that those who were known to each other upon earth should renew their acquaintance after they entered upon the next stage of their existence. I make no allusion at present to the grounds on which their belief rested, nor do I stop to inquire whether or not they arrived at their conclusions by the indirect and unacknowledged assistance of divine revelation; I simply mention the fact, as it seems to exhibit the tendencies of the human mind, and to show what was considered, by men who had no direct access to the holy scriptures, to be one, if not the chief, source of happiness in the future state. But however elevated the language was in which they spoke of the subject, and although some of it has often been admired, it cannot bear a comparison with the sublime and animated description given of the society of heaven by the apostle Paul:—"But ye are come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant." In that illustrious society, the members of which far excel in dignity the most honourable among the great of this world, though their names stand high in the annals of fame—there will be a combination of all that is great and splendid in

intellect, of all that is lovely and sublime in morality; of all the excellences, in short, which can be exhibited by created intelligences. And not only so, the Great Supreme himself, who is the source and centre of all excellence, will honour that society with his presence, and constantly preside over it. Although, between him and those who compose it, there is essentially all the distance that separates the creature from the Creator, the finite from the infinite, he will condescend to dwell with them, and take a deep and permanent interest in all their pursuits, and in every thing which relates to their social enjoyment.

In connexion with this topic, there are questions which—though some may, perhaps, consider them more curious than important—will very naturally be asked: I mean the questions respecting the probability of redeemed men recognizing each other in the heavenly state, and renewing the friendships which were formed upon earth. The scriptures, it is readily admitted, contain no explicit affirmations concerning these subjects; but there are some considerations of a general kind derived from the constitution of human nature, and the views which are given by the sacred writers, of the felicity which shall be enjoyed in the future world, which warrant us to conclude, that death will not be the means of cutting them off from one source of sanctified pleasure to which they had access upon earth.

No one, I imagine, will be so bold as to affirm that there is any previous improbability that such will

be the case ; the most that can be said upon the other side is, that the scriptures give us no direct or positive information about the matter. But the reserve which they maintain, cannot, with propriety, be considered to be decisive of the question ; nor as intimating that the subject is one with which we, at present, have no concern. On the other hand, it is generally considered to be one of a deeply-interesting nature, and one which cannot well be passed over in silence when we are speaking of the future happiness of the righteous. The following considerations, in my estimation at least, go a great way to determine the question :—

In order that our personal identity and individual character may be preserved, the consciousness of our previous existence, the recollection of the scenes through which we passed, and the circumstances which occurred in our history, must survive the stroke of death, and be carried with us to the next stage of our being. Were all the transactions of this life, and the incidents which happened in it, to be effaced from our memory, it would be impossible to bring home a conviction of guilt to any individual, or to make any one appreciate properly the value of a reward ; and the decisions of the Judge, at the day of retribution, would, in that case, utterly fail to answer the intended purpose. If, then, the recollection of all our present actions will be retained in the future life, how can we separate the recollection of these actions from *the knowledge* of the persons with whom we come

into contact, and with whom we conversed, and who were associated with us in the most important transactions of our lives? The character of our actions, indeed, is modified by so many circumstances connected with other persons, that we cannot conceive of the actions being fresh in the memory, whilst we ourselves remain utterly oblivious of the persons on whom they terminated. This consideration alone, I conceive, determines the question; and it removes the subject altogether from among those which are beset with dubiety, and enveloped in obscurity.

Besides, whatever knowledge of this kind we may suppose to be possessed by the righteous in the disembodied state, it is next to an absolute certainty, that, during the solemnities of the general judgment, disclosures will be made, and the conduct of men developed in such a way as will inevitably lead many to the recognition of each other. When the results of any undertaking, which has been prompted by piety or benevolence, shall be unfolded at the great day, is it at all probable, that they who planned the undertaking, and who exerted their energies together to complete it, shall feel as if they had met for the first time, when God shall publicly own and reward their labours? The development of their procedure and its bearings upon the temporal and spiritual interests of many who shall be present with them at the great assize, will bring them so closely together, and revive so fully the recollection of all the circumstances connected with their labours upon earth, that

they cannot but recognize each other, and experience, in a vastly higher degree, all the sympathies, and feelings, and affections, which possessed their minds before they were separated by death. When the circumstances connected with the history of a pious family are undergoing a solemn review, will not all the members of it feel themselves equally interested in the decision of the Judge? And will not the whole circumstances of the case be such, that the father cannot fail to recognize the son, and the son the father, and the sister the brother? And if they shall know each other then, the improvement which shall take place upon their social condition forbids us to imagine that their intercourse will ever again be interrupted, or their knowledge of each other destroyed.

But this is not all: There are various circumstances mentioned in the scriptures, which it would be difficult to account for in a satisfactory manner, unless we suppose that the knowledge in question is possessed by the righteous in the future state. Respecting Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, it is said, when they died, that they "were gathered to their people." And David, when one of his children died, consoled himself by the belief that he should meet him again:—"I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." The form of expression in these different instances is such as would scarcely have been employed if the ties which connected the parties together upon earth were *not*, in some way, to be renewed after death. And

we can hardly conceive of the renewal of them in any form which does not include the mutual recognition of their persons. On Mount Tabor, at the transfiguration of Christ, the apostles, Peter, James, and John, at once recognized Moses and Elias, though both these persons appeared in a glorified form. On that occasion they exhibited an appearance similar to that which the righteous shall exhibit after the resurrection; and if they were known then, we can assign no reason why they will not be recognized by all who shall be introduced into their society in the heavenly state. But if Moses and Elias shall be known, we may thence safely conclude that others shall be so, as well as they. And the apostle Paul, among other motives to diligence and fidelity, and perseverance in the work assigned to him, mentions the joy arising from seeing, in heaven, the result of his labours:—

“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? for ye are our glory and joy.” Does not this clearly imply, that he not only expected that those whom he was the instrument of converting should be admitted to the immediate presence of the Saviour, to enjoy all the immunities of heaven, but that he should recognize them, and derive a large portion of his felicity from looking upon them as individuals whom he was the means of saving?

Though, on such grounds as these, we may fondly cherish the pleasing thought, that the righteous shall recognize each other in the heavenly state, I should

deem it presumptuous in the extreme to hazard a positive affirmation about the way in which their knowledge will be obtained. We might easily enough, it is true, imagine a variety of ways in which it could be communicated to them. We might suppose, for instance, that they will obtain it by mere intuition, or by some special communication made to them upon the subject; or we may suppose it will be by allusions to incidents in the history of their earthly existence—for these will, doubtless, form the subject of frequent conversation—or we can even imagine, that it will be by observing the visible form of the body, and the very expression of the countenance, which will, in all probability, be carried forward to the next stage of our being, and be impressed upon the future body by the hand of the Creator, after it is raised from the grave. But about this it is vain to speculate. It is enough that we are warranted to believe such knowledge will be possessed.

Although it may be found to be a comparatively easy and pleasing task to dilate upon the fact itself, we shall find it difficult, perhaps impossible, in our present circumstances, to conceive aright of the joy which shall be felt when relatives and friends shall meet together in the regions of immortality. There are no incidents which come within the range of our observation and experience, in our earthly existence, which can produce emotions exactly similar in kind, or equal in degree, to those which shall rise in the *minds* of the redeemed in the heavenly state, when

first they shall recognize the persons whose joys and sympathies they formerly shared, and whose hearts were united to their own by the tenderest ties, in the antecedent stages of their being. We may think of the most devoted friends being separated, during a long series of years, by oceans and continents, or of the members of a loving family being violently torn away from each other, to endure, in different regions, all the horrors of exile and captivity; and we, perhaps, may be able to form a conception of the tumult of delightful emotions which rises in their breast when they are restored to each other; but what heart can conceive of the joy of parents when they shall meet their children in the mansions of celestial bliss, where there shall be no snares nor temptations nor dangers, and where the family circle shall never again be broken! Or what language can express the transport of sisters when they shall be restored to their brothers, or of friends when they shall be reunited in the land of purity and love, after having been separated by death and the grave! But these scenes will yet be realized; and the emotions produced by such meetings will be of the purest and most delightful nature.

Fourthly, The contemplation of the works of the Creator will form part of their employment, and will be one of the sources of their happiness.

The contemplation of the different departments of creation is an employment in which holy men upon earth often engage; and whilst it furnishes them with

various and striking illustrations of the attributes of the divine character, it yields a pleasure more satisfying than can be derived from any worldly pursuit. And if it be a source of enjoyment to them now, what may we not expect it to be when their nature shall be perfected, when their mental powers shall be enlarged, and the field of contemplation indefinitely extended! But this is not a matter of mere conjecture. We find from the book of the Revelation, that the glorified spirits who wait around Jehovah's seat, and whose powers are engaged on themes of the highest order connected with their own salvation, exclaim, in their ascriptions of praise, "great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty." The works of the Creator are so diversified and numerous and great, that they will furnish ample materials for contemplation throughout an endless duration; and as his creative energies will, in all probability, continue to be put forth for ever; and, it may be, in forms more sublime and glorious than any of those which have attracted the notice and engaged the attention of intelligent beings, the contemplation of them will be a source of pleasure which shall never be exhausted.

There can be no question that the field of contemplation, over which redeemed men will be permitted to range, will extend far beyond the limits of the sphere which shall be assigned to them for a habitation. In consequence of the vast improvement which shall be *effected* upon the corporeal organization with which

they shall be invested, and which they will use as the instrument of perception, they will be able to discover proofs and illustrations of some of the attributes of his character, which are, at present, altogether imperceptible by them. It will hardly be doubted, I presume, that if we could now perceive all the qualities—for it is not improbable that there are many latent ones—of the various substances of which our globe is composed ; and could discern the innumerable and endlessly diversified forms of insect life, with which the air and the earth and the waters abound ; and could distinctly see all the chemical and mechanical processes, which are perpetually going on in the different tribes of vegetable and animal existences by which we are surrounded, we should have more elevated conceptions of the wisdom of the Creator ; and possess means, which are at present beyond our reach, of gratifying the higher and holier desires of our nature. Such capabilities would enable us to acquire a knowledge of the divine character vastly greater than we can now obtain ; and we could not move about with such scenes of wonder everywhere in our view, without recognizing the hand and the presiding agency of the Infinite Intelligence, and experiencing emotions of the most pleasing kind. In these circumstances, every department, indeed every individual object in nature, would be a kind of transparency in which his character would be distinctly seen ; and if the affections of men were properly disposed towards him, this earth would be felt to be a sphere of

existence more desirable, and to be possessed of greater capabilities of making them happy than it was in its pristine state. Such a state of existence would correspond, in many important particulars, with the descriptions which are contained in the scriptures, of the state upon which redeemed men shall enter after the resurrection ; and the supposition I have made respecting it may serve to show how large a portion of the enjoyment of the heavenly state will spring from the contemplation of the works of the Creator. Such a pursuit will not be uncongenial to their nature in its perfected state, nor inconsistent with any other exercises in which they shall engage ; nor will the happiness to which it gives rise be less satisfying, or less suited to their tastes and habits, in the circumstances in which they shall be placed, than that which shall be drawn from any other source.

But though such a state as the one I have been describing may resemble, in many particulars, the state which awaits the righteous, it must fall vastly short of what it will be. In that state their field of contemplation will be inconceivably enlarged ; and such may be the nature of the bodies which they shall possess, that they may be able to range over the universe, and contemplate the manifestations of creative wisdom and power, and of divine benevolence, which are exhibited, in the numberless and stupendous worlds which have started into being at the fiat of the Almighty. Many of the physical obstructions which, in this imperfect *state*, limit the range of their vision and obscure their

view, and which impede the exercise of the higher powers of their nature, will be removed ; and with a corporeal frame which will eminently assist them in their investigations, they will perceive brighter visions of the divine glory than they had ever beheld in these abodes of darkness and death.

The incorrectness of the notion which, it is to be regretted, is cherished by many persons whose piety cannot be questioned, that, besides the habitation of the Most High, where angels and principalities and powers dwell, the earth is the only sphere of animated and intelligent existence which has been created ; and that the stupendous globes which garnish the heavens are mere luminous bodies, placed there solely for the convenience of man, will be discovered ; and the diminutiveness, nay, the almost utter insignificance of the earth, when compared with other parts of the universe, will be seen. Such contracted notions will be for ever dissipated, and will give place to conceptions more rational and elevated. And these conceptions, I apprehend, will not so much depend upon the results of abstract reasoning, as upon the more convincing evidence of sense. For it is not beyond the limits of possibility, on the other hand, it is highly probable, especially when we consider the language which is employed by the sacred writers to describe the capabilities of the righteous in the future state, that they may be able to estimate, by the assistance of their visual organs alone, the respective magnitudes and distances and motions of the different

bodies in the system to which the earth belongs ; and also perceive in them the effects of the great general laws which are in operation in our world.

But what would such a scene be, great and magnificent as it unquestionably is, to the scenes which will be exhibited in the vast regions of space which lie beyond the limits of the solar system ! Supposing that the fixed stars are so many central suns around which are incessantly revolving vast assemblages of planetary bodies, what sublime objects of contemplation would they be in such circumstances ! Situated as we at present are, and with the assistance of the most powerful instruments which have yet been contrived, these luminaries appear to be stationary points, whose perceptible bulk is exceedingly small, and amongst which there seems to be nothing like order or arrangement ; but with powers of vision as great as those which, there is reason to think, will be possessed by redeemed men in the higher stage of their existence, we might be able, from the point of observation on which we now stand, to perceive many of them to be bodies superior in magnitude and splendour to the one by whose radiance our earth is illuminated ; and even to descry the complicated movements of entire systems at one view.

It ought not to be supposed, however, that the scenery of the heavens is spread out by the Creator merely to afford subjects on which redeemed men may exercise their intellectual powers ; or that the investigation of such subjects will be a source of enjoy-

ment to them any farther than it tends to illustrate the character of the God of salvation, and to give them loftier conceptions of the great Being who rescued them from misery and destruction. To separate these subjects of investigation from the higher and more interesting themes connected with the scheme of human redemption ; and to represent them as engaging their attention, and as being the means of affording them enjoyment after the work of redemption is investigated and understood, in as far, at least, as it is possible for created beings to understand it—for it seems to be supposed by some, that it is a subject not sufficiently great and interesting to afford materials for contemplation to the redeemed throughout eternity—they are invested with an importance which does not essentially belong to them ; and to speak of them in such a way has an obvious tendency to generate feelings in the mind respecting the work of Christ, of a different nature from those which are produced by the language of the persons who “spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” There is something in the minds even of the most enlightened Christians which makes them shrink away from the thought of heaven bearing a resemblance to a school of philosophy, where the sciences are cultivated ; they feel a higher satisfaction in thinking of it as a *temple* in which devotional exercises form the chief employment. It is when viewed in this light that it is possessed of the strongest attractions to them ; because such exercises will tend to keep pro-

minently in their view that sacred and all-important subject which is invested with an interest which no other subject possesses ; and which—if the revelations of scripture are to be our guide in the formation of our opinions respecting the matter—will continue to be the most interesting subject of contemplation, and the theme of their highest praise throughout eternity. The material universe, therefore, with all its grandeur and magnificence, will be a subject of but secondary interest and importance to redeemed men. It will be only a means to an end ; but if the contemplation of it tend to elevate their conceptions of the greatness of the Almighty, and in that way to make the condescension and compassion exhibited in the scheme of redemption more prominently appear, it will answer an important purpose, and will be a source of pure and satisfying enjoyment.

Fifthly, The dispensations of divine providence to them in this life will also engage their attention, and be productive of a large amount of happiness.

All the arrangements of providence are made in subserviency to an ulterior end ; and they are to be regarded as an order of means employed by God to qualify the subjects of his grace for the particular place which shall be assigned to them in the future state. They must, therefore, from the very nature of the case, be often dark and mysterious, and place those whom they are designed to benefit in the most *painful* situation. So complicated, indeed, are the

methods adopted by infinite wisdom to improve the character of the heirs of immortality, and to work out his own purposes respecting our world, that we cannot comprehend them, nor discover the reasons which influence the divine Mind in any particular parts of his procedure. In these circumstances, we must be still and know that he is God; and in the spirit of humility and submission exclaim—"Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known!"

It is unnecessary to suppose, however, that the nature of these arrangements is such as to render it impossible for created beings to understand them, and to acquire such a knowledge of the entire scheme of providence and of the adaptation of its different parts to accomplish the end for which it was framed, as to perceive the rectitude of the divine procedure, and even to call forth their grateful praises. What renders it inexplicable to us at present is, our ignorance of ourselves and of the effect of particular circumstances upon us; our inability to perceive how one event, perhaps of a painful nature, can bring about a series of other events of a different description; and our incapability of tracing the connexion between the present and the future. But, when these arrangements shall have answered their intended purposes, the air of mysteriousness which formerly hung over them will be cleared away; and the whole, I doubt not, will be brought within the limits of human comprehension in the future world. Of the

divine dispensations it may, with propriety, be affirmed, "What we know not now, we shall know hereafter."

They are so closely connected, indeed I may almost say interwoven, with the working out of the eternal purposes of grace, that the full development of them cannot fail to be interesting to redeemed men ; and it will afford them subjects of contemplation of the most important and elevated nature. But there is not, that I am aware of, any ground on which to rest the hope that they will be developed instantaneously, or that the results of them will be traced back to their causes by a single glance ; they will be unfolded gradually, and clearer light will be incessantly breaking in upon them till the connexion of the whole with the great work of human redemption is seen. In the heavenly state, the redeemed will see, as upon a map, all the windings and intricacies of their earthly pilgrimage ; they will perceive the unseen dangers which lay in their path ; and when they remember what befel them at particular stages of the way, they will gratefully acknowledge that God has done all things well. They will then see how often they would have stept out of the path, and heedlessly rushed upon destruction had not God in his providence checked them by some affliction or disappointment ; and they will joyfully think of the gentle and merciful means which were employed to bring them back again when they did go astray. Every stripe *they received*, and every pain they recollect to have

felt, will then be regarded as memorials of eternal love; and whilst they will excite in their breasts mingled emotions of wonder and gratitude, they will call forth songs of praise.

If we except the varied subjects of contemplation furnished by the work of redemption, we can scarcely conceive, indeed, of a theme more interesting and pleasing than this; or of one that will furnish more ample and striking illustrations of the divine faithfulness and love. The records of each individual's experience, and the incidents which compose his personal history, will, when investigated in the world of light, be found to be so many commentaries upon such declarations as these:—"All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours; and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."—"We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."—"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."—The truth of all these statements will then be fully perceived and felt and acknowledged. And when the whole multitude of the redeemed shall meet together in the place which the Saviour is gone to prepare for them, they will look back with adoring gratitude upon

all the way by which they were led to the city of habitation, and upon the most painful circumstances which occurred. And as they occasionally renew their retrospections of the incidents which happened in the former stage of their being, the employment will impart a higher zest to their pleasures, and make them strike a louder note in the sacred anthem which shall for ever ascend from the abodes of the righteous to the throne of the Eternal.

Sixthly, They will derive their highest enjoyment from contemplating the scheme of redemption and celebrating the wonders of redeeming love.

If the value of the soul is to be taken into the account and permitted to influence our judgment of the Almighty's doings, we must, I think, whatever some may affirm to the contrary, consider the work of human redemption, to us at least, to be the greatest and most interesting of them all ; and that it illustrates the attributes of his character as well as the principles of his government, more fully than any of his other works can do. But there are beings in the universe, with intellects and powers of discernment superior to those of men, who seem to have conceived of it in a similar way. Into its mysteries and facts and stupendous results, " the angels desire to look." Although these holy beings have beheld displays of creative wisdom and power which " eye hath not seen," and have listened to narratives of his ways in other spheres of existence, which " ear hath not

heard," yet do they look down with wonder and astonishment to these abodes of suffering and mortality, and pry, with the deepest interest, into the workings of that marvellous scheme which has brought "glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will to men." And whilst their mighty intellects are so intensely engaged in scrutinizing the mysteries of redemption, they experience a measure of sacred pleasure when they see one of the inhabitants of the earth brought under the influence of saving grace, higher than that which seems to be produced by the contemplation of the material frame-work of the universe, or of any thing that is taking place throughout its illimitable extent:—"There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." And if we add to all this the descriptions which are given, particularly in the book of the Revelation, of the exercises in which angels and redeemed men are occupied in the heavenly state, it will, perhaps, be admitted, that it is not without reason we assign the highest place to the work of human redemption, among the subjects which shall engage their attention; and that it is one which will never occupy a secondary place in their estimation, or fail to yield them fresh enjoyments through the revolving cycles of eternity.

In this stage of their existence, they know little more than a few of the doctrines more immediately connected with their personal interest in it; and even these are, in many instances, and to a great extent,

rendered obscure in consequence of the prejudices generated by the state of their minds, and the circumstances in which they are placed. But of many others they know nothing more than that they are contained in the scriptures, and that it is their duty to believe them on the authority of inspiration. They are unable either to comprehend or explain them. What do they know, for instance, of the origin of moral evil, or of the transmission of the principles of depravity from Adam to his remotest posterity? What do they know about the mode of the Holy Spirit's operation in conversion and sanctification, or of the way in which Satan finds access to their minds? And how can they understand, so as to be able fully to reconcile the doctrine respecting the free agency of man and the eternal purpose of God to save the elect? Concerning all these they are, at present, constrained to exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" But if these are inexplicable, what shall we say of the union of the divine with the human nature in the person of Jesus Christ? Or, of the union of three persons in the one glorious Godhead? Some of these subjects are so profound that the highest created intelligences in heaven will never, perhaps, be able fully to comprehend them. They will for ever remain among the deep things of God. But it may not be so with respect to them all. There is reason to believe that the redeemed, when they are made perfect in body and mind, will be able

to comprehend many things which are, at present, incomprehensible to them ; and that the discoveries which they will make will inconceivably increase their happiness, and greatly tend to stimulate them in their profound investigations. So little, indeed, do they know at present, that it may be said they will but begin their inquiries when they enter heaven. And, as they advance, more splendid glories will be unfolded ; yet will the subject still be new, and still more deeply interesting.

Besides, from the obscure hints contained in the scriptures upon the subject, it would not, perhaps, be too much to affirm, that redeemed men in the heavenly state will be able to penetrate the thick gloom of everlasting night in which the condemned are enveloped, to behold their sufferings and misery. And, surely, it is not difficult to conceive how the contemplation of their own deserts, and the circumstances in which they might have been placed, will increase their gratitude, and make them meditate with a livelier interest upon the distinguishing love which fixed upon them as its unworthy objects. The beings who shall be seen in the dark abodes of perdition, writhing under the inexpressible agonies of despair, were once like themselves ; possessed of intellectual faculties equal to their own ; and were invited to participate of the joys of heaven as well as they. But what are they now ? They are slaves of all the passions which disturb and pollute the soul ; implacable enemies of

truth and holiness and love ; degraded outcasts from the blessed presence of God ; companions of devils ; and the victims of the worm that shall never die. What a spectacle to the universe ! and what a contrast to what they themselves are ! They resemble both in mind and body the glorious person who sits upon the throne. They are raised to glory, honour, and immortality ; and the transformation which has taken place upon them, as well as their elevation to these seats of bliss, will exhibit to angels and principalities and powers in heavenly places, the manifold wisdom of God.

But the contemplation of these subjects will be enlivened by devotional exercises of a social nature. They shall "serve God day and night in his temple." The services of a temple are of a spiritual kind, and those who perform them have access to the presence of the Deity who dwells in it. In the temple at Jerusalem, where, for a time, the shekinah appeared, the offering of sacrifice and of supplication formed the principal part of the service. But no one except the high priest was allowed to enter into the most holy place, where the symbol of the divine presence was ; and even he but once in the year. Had he drawn aside the veil, and presumed to step within the hallowed enclosure at any other time, he would have died. In the celestial temple, however, where Jehovah displays all his glory, and into which all his servants have free access, sacrifice and supplication will

not be any longer necessary. They will give place to everlasting praise. In that exercise redeemed men will take a conspicuous part, and express the rapturous feelings of their minds in the language of the new song :—" Thou art worthy ; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation, and hast made us unto our God kings and priests." And whilst their elevated strains shall rise as the sound of many waters, the multitudes of angels with whom they shall be associated, will join the sacred song, and exclaim :—" Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." What employment can be more delightful than that ! Or, what can be more becoming in creatures who owe such a debt of gratitude to the great Being whom they worship !

The feelings which give rise to adoration and praise are in themselves pleasing in the highest degree ; and we might as well attempt to separate light from the rays of the sun, as to separate happiness from the experience of them. That being the case, what inconceivable joy must attend the full expression of such feelings in the loud hallelujahs of heaven ! The power of harmony to transport the soul is generally felt ; and if the strains which can be raised on earth, by human instrumentality, are capable of producing such effects, with what raptures will the redeemed

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listen to the music of the skies ! The highest created intellects, with organs exquisitely tuned, will be employed in the song above ; and though designed as an ascription of praise to the great Eternal, its melodious sounds will thrill through the souls of the worshippers themselves, and fill them with unutterable delight.



CHAPTER VI.

ON THE GRADATIONS WHICH SHALL EXIST AMONG THE RIGHTEOUS IN THE HEAVENLY STATE.

FROM the cursory survey which we have taken of the heavenly state, of the pursuits which shall engage the attention of redeemed men, and of the numerous and varied sources of enjoyment to which they shall have perpetual access, we may safely conclude, that they will all be perfectly happy, and that not one of them will have a single desire ungratified. But, in such a vast multitude gathered out of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, and composed of individuals whose intellectual powers were endlessly diversified, and whose habits, as well as their circumstances in society, were all in some respects different; it is reasonable to suppose, although the scriptures were silent upon the subject, that their capabilities of enjoyment will be as varied as they are upon earth, and that some of them will be raised to higher honours, and exhibit a greater degree of glory than others. That, however, will not be the effect of a mere arbitrary appointment on the part of God, it will be the necessary result of their principles and conduct, and of the circumstances in which they

were placed in this probationary state. The gradations which will exist in the heavenly state will not be such as to produce envy in any mind—to interrupt the harmony which will universally prevail, or, in the smallest degree, to operate as a barrier to the delightful intercourse which the whole community of redeemed men will have with each other. Such gradations, instead of being unfavourable to happiness, or of indicating any imperfection in the society where they exist, are of a directly opposite character; and, unless the principles of human nature, and the wise arrangements of providence, and the rules by which the divine Being is guided in all his procedure towards men were completely changed, a community in which there was no variety of intellect among its members, and no difference in their capability of enjoyment, or in their outward circumstances, could not be a permanently happy one. It is questionable, indeed, if perfect happiness could be enjoyed in such a society at all.

The state of society upon earth which approximates nearest to perfection, which seems to be best adapted to our nature, and is productive of the greatest amount of happiness, is that in which there are gradations. It requires no legislative enactments nor any exercise of authority to bring a community into that state; it naturally tends to it in the ordinary course of things. The moment that intellectual superiority begins to be felt and acknowledged, and a *proper stimulus* is given to industry, the principle

which leads to it comes into operation ; and it is developed in so many ways, that lines of demarcation speedily and prominently appear to distinguish one class from another. Such a state of society affords the amplest opportunity for the exercise of the diversified powers of the human mind ; it opens a channel in which virtuous emulation may safely and beneficially flow ; and it furnishes appropriate rewards to the diligent and the enterprising.

Nor is it at all to be wondered at that such is the case, when we consider that that is the principle upon which the arrangements in the kingdom of providence are formed. Some are elevated in society, others are depressed ; some revel in affluence, others are in the deepest poverty ; some enjoy almost uninterrupted prosperity, others are doomed to constant adversity ; some pass the greater part of their days comparative strangers to pain and affliction, whilst others are subjected to perpetual irritation and suffering. Yet these arrangements of the Most High, it is generally allowed—and universal experience seems to bear testimony to the fact—are better fitted than any other to call into operation and bring to perfection the virtues of the christian character. And if that important end be gained, it cannot be doubted that human happiness is greatly promoted. It is true, the present is a state of trial ; but if gradations are visible in all the departments of human society, and are so well fitted to promote the highest interests of men, the fact affords something like presumptive

evidence, that the same great principles which produce these results upon earth, will operate in heaven.

Another, and perhaps a more striking exemplification of the principle is furnished by the church upon earth. The most attentive observer cannot fail to see that there are great diversities not only in the faith and holiness of its members, but also in the nature and measure of the gifts they possess, the stations which they occupy, and the duties they have to perform :—" For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think ; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office ; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."—" But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. And he gave some, apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." These passages clearly show what was the state of the church in primitive times ; but it is questionable if the difference in the characters and circumstances of its members as indicated by the diversified gifts which they possessed, was greater than it now is when the extraordinary influences of the Spirit are withdrawn. *Talents of every description, and intellects of every*

grade, from the lowest to the highest, are called into exercise in the church of Christ; and no one who is competent to form a judgment on the subject, doubts, for a moment, that the arrangement, in virtue of which these are called forth and brought into exercise in the sphere to which they are best adapted, is productive of incalculable advantage to the body at large. And if so, the good of its members individually must also be promoted to the same extent; the happiness of the body being nothing else than the happiness of the individuals of which it is composed.

But if we ascend a step higher, we shall find that the same principle is in operation amongst the holy angels in the celestial world. This seems to be plainly intimated by the language of scripture:—"For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him."—"That ye may know what is the exceeding greatness of his power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."* Whatever we

* Colos. i. 16; Eph. i. 18—21.

may conceive the distinctions mentioned in these passages to be, we are warranted to conclude that some orders of the angelic beings are more highly exalted in official dignity than others, whilst some excel in strength and intellectual greatness. But though they are not, like the human race, raised to these honours by divine mercy, they are indebted for the possession of them to divine goodness. And since none of them can, by any possibility, have stronger claims on that goodness than others, there can be no cause of dissatisfaction or discontent on the part of those who are lower than others in the scale of dignity and intellectual greatness, because they have not been placed higher; nor can the unequal distribution of these favours, in any way, be a ground of reflection on the equity of the Most High. All of them are happy to the utmost extent of their capacity, and are possessed of the faculties requisite for the services in which they are employed. Nor do these gradations interrupt the harmony of heaven, nor introduce a discordant note into the anthem which they for ever sing in the higher temple:—"And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."

Although I by no means assert that the doctrine in question can be satisfactorily proved by any analogies

however striking, they, at least, bring it within the limits of probability ; and whilst they assist us in determining the import of many passages of scripture, they ought to give additional force to the conclusions to which such passages seem naturally to lead. The following series of remarks will, perhaps, be found to go a great way towards the establishment of its truth :—

First, The intellectual faculties of redeemed men will be as diversified in the heavenly state as they are in this world.

Intellectual power is one of the gifts which the Creator has, for wise purposes, conferred upon the human race ; and it is, perhaps, of all the ordinary gifts which he bestows, capable of being improved to the greatest extent, and is subservient to the most important purposes. The difference in the circumstances of men, occasioned by mental culture, is surprising, and shows how high they may rise in the scale of intelligence. Indeed, some have affirmed—and, perhaps, the affirmation is, in some measure, founded on facts—that there is not so great a difference betwixt the most sagacious brute animal and the lowest savage, as there is betwixt the savage and the most improved of the human species. Making all the allowance, however, which can reasonably be required for the improvement effected by education, it cannot be doubted that there is an almost endless variety in the original constitution of different minds.

Many, perhaps the majority of mankind, are as incompetent, however much their faculties may be cultivated, to comprehend the profound scientific speculations of men of gigantic intellect, or to understand fully the nature of the discoveries made by them, as they are, by their physical energy, to arrest in its orbit the globe on which they dwell. Such marked distinctions must be traced, not to the means of improvement enjoyed, and the use which has been made of them, but to the will of the Creator who originally formed the human mind. And who will question the rectitude of his procedure when he distributes his gifts to whom and in what measure he pleases? As well might we find fault with the arrangements of his providence because every man is not born to inherit a throne or a large estate, as to complain that all are not endowed with an equal degree of mental power. That power, though it is, no doubt, conferred for the general good of mankind, is the means of individual enjoyment, and renders its possessor susceptible of the most elevated pleasure. He who, by the superiority of his intellect, can explore the different departments of the creation, who can comprehend the nature of the laws which are concealed from the vulgar eye, and can trace the power and wisdom which they all display, has within himself a source of refined gratification; and he experiences emotions of which the man has no conception who looks upon the varied beauties of this lower world and on the awful

grandeur of the firmament "with brute unconscious gaze."

When men of enlarged capacity, who have travelled to the very confines of the cloudy and dubious regions which bound human knowledge, shall lay aside the garments of mortality and mingle with the spirits of just men made perfect, they will be placed in the same relative position which they occupied in the former stage of their existence. We can scarcely conceive, indeed, how it can be otherwise; and it would be difficult, if not impossible, to assign a satisfactory reason why the intellectual superiority of such individuals as Newton and Pascal and Milton should cease to be seen and felt after they enter upon a sphere where they can exercise their capacious powers with greater advantage. When the field of contemplation is indefinitely extended, and the impediments which formerly obstructed the exercise of their powers are entirely and for ever removed, they will be able to penetrate deeper into the subjects which shall engage their attention, than the less highly-favoured individuals whom, in this world, they so far excelled. They will, in that case, necessarily occupy a higher place than the persons whose capacities are more limited. Yet what is that but the carrying out of the principle on which the Most High acts in other departments of his government? "Unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one."

Secondly, Their capabilities of enjoyment will vary

according to the degree of conformity to the i of God to which they attained in this life.

This, I think, is not only implied but directly asserted in the reply which our Saviour made to two of his disciples who desired to sit, the one on his right hand and the other on his left, in his kingdom.—“Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to whom it is prepared of my Father.” * The attentive reader will, at once, perceive that the Saviour does not affirm there are no such places of honour to be occupied by any of his servants as those which they desired; and if they did not exist, he would have corrected the mistake into which the disciples had fallen. Instead of doing that, however, he admitted that they were right respecting the existence of the places of official dignity which they wished to occupy; but he intimated that, in the bestowal of them, he would be guided by considerations of a different nature from those by which they imagined he would be influenced; and that these places

* Matt. xx. 22, 23.

destined for the persons who should drink most deeply of the cup of his sufferings.

This shows, as clearly as anything can well do, that the happiness which shall be enjoyed by redeemed men in the future state, will spring from the character which is formed in this life ; and that it will be modified by the particular way in which the character is formed, and the degree of resemblance which it bears to the character of the Lord Jesus Christ. All the excellencies of his character were exhibited under his sufferings, and it was by them that he was consecrated to the high office which he now sustains in the upper sanctuary. It is true, the holy principles which regulated his conduct required no such ordeal to try their strength or bring them to perfection ; but as he is the first-born of the redeemed family, and is designed to be an exemplar to all who shall follow him to glory, the happiness he now enjoys in the heavenly kingdom, as Mediator, arises from the holy principles which were developed by his actions while he tabernacled upon earth, and the honours he now wears were bestowed as the reward of his sufferings. Indeed, the connexion betwixt his humiliation and his exaltation, betwixt his cross and his crown, is distinctly recognized in the holy scriptures. And if such a connexion exists in the case of the Master, we may reasonably conclude that it exists also in the case of the servant.

Although I am far from wishing it to be understood by this remark, that the sufferings of Christ

resulted from a cause similar to that from which the sufferings of his people arise, or that they were inflicted for a similar purpose ; yet their sufferings resemble his in this particular, that they are an order of means by which they are prepared for the sphere in which they shall move in the heavenly state. They are not, in any degree, nor in any sense in which the word can be used, meritorious ; but they exercise and bring to maturity the holy principles which are implanted in our nature by the agency of the divine Spirit. And it is obvious, that the more vigorous these principles are, so much the more will they who are under their influence be fitted for engaging in the noble pursuits which shall occupy their attention in the future world, and of sharing the hallowed enjoyments which shall be experienced by the righteous throughout eternity. This is the sentiment contained in the language of Paul :—" For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ;" and it is evidently to it that James alludes when he says :—" Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations." Now, since the principles of some are more severely tried, and brought into a vastly more vigorous state than are the principles of others, they are qualified for higher exercises, and are capable of more exquisite pleasure than they can possibly be whose principles are not so fully exercised, nor brought to such a state of maturity upon earth.

Thirdly, The rewards which shall be bestowed upon them, will be proportioned to the use they make of the talents committed to their trust.

We should find it exceedingly difficult to conceive of a principle more equitable than this, or more likely to answer the high purposes which the Almighty has in view in the government of the universe. It commends itself to every enlightened mind, and the righteous Judge of all the earth has established it as the rule according to which he will pronounce the decisions of the great day. Our Saviour, in different ways, and on different occasions, illustrated this great and important principle in the instructions which he imparted to his disciples while he was upon the earth. It was evidently for that purpose that the following parables were delivered :—“ For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one ; to every man according to his several ability ; and straightway took his journey. After a long time the Lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents : behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant : thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things : enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that

had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord."—"A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities."* There can be no question, that these parables were intended to describe the circumstances in which the servants of God are placed in this world, and to encourage them to activity in his service. They represent their responsibility as being commensurate with the amount of their trust,

* *Matt. xxv. 14, 15, 19—23; Luke xix. 12, 13, 15—19.*

and the reward as being proportionate to their fidelity and diligence.

There is—and no one will doubt, that it is for a wise end—a great and striking inequality in the number and value of the gifts bestowed by the Most High upon his servants. Some of them have a large number of talents in their possession, others have not so many. Nor are they less varied in kind than unequal in number. Some are possessed of intellectual faculties fitted to make them useful in the church and to raise them to eminence in society; some possess riches which generally create an influence corresponding to their amount, and are the means of enabling them to do good; whilst others possess both in a very limited degree. Such diversities in their circumstances, in a state of probation, affect their responsibility, and are indissolubly connected with their future destination. The results, in the very nature of things, must be as diversified as the circumstances out of which they arose, and will retain their identity and their relation to these circumstances, in another state of existence. What other influence can be drawn from such passages of scripture as the following?—
 “Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”—
 “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of [the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” Indeed, the nature of

the produce is not more closely connected with the seed which is cast into the ground nor more modified by its quality, than will be the future rewards of men by their present conduct. And the principle will be exemplified in the amount as well as in the nature of their rewards. The necessary result of this arrangement, in the circumstances of redeemed men in the heavenly state, must be obvious.

Fourthly, The divine approbation enjoyed by them will be commensurate with the excellence of their character, as indicated by their devotedness to the service of God.

It will, I believe, be generally acknowledged, that few of our emotions are of a more pleasing nature than those which spring from the enjoyment of the approbation of others ; but more especially, if it be publicly expressed by persons of a high character who are competent to form a proper estimate of the actions on account of which it is bestowed. We naturally desire the approbation of others ; and those in whose mind such a desire does not exist must be entire strangers to a class of feelings of the most delightful kind. It inspires us with zeal, and makes us consider the difficulties to be comparatively insignificant, which, in other circumstances, would prove almost insurmountable. But however valuable it may be in itself, and however gratifying to us, there can be no comparison betwixt the approbation of a fellow-creature and that which is bestowed by the

great Being who searches the heart and by whom actions are weighed. And its value will be unspeakably enhanced by the consideration, that the amount of it will exactly correspond with the measure in which the principles that called it forth were developed.

In the innumerable company of the redeemed, there will not be one whose happiness will be incomplete ; not one whose joy will not be full. But their emotions, notwithstanding, will be endlessly diversified ; and that diversity will arise from the shades of difference which appeared in their previous character, and the manner which they improved their privileges in this world. The servant whose talent gained ten, and who, in consequence, obtained the government of ten cities, received the commendation of his master with more exquisite pleasure than he whose talent gained but five, and who received a corresponding measure of reward. So shall it be with all the servants of Christ at the great day. And if we could imagine that the feeling of shame could arise in the mind of any one of them, that individual would experience it who formed a low estimate of the divine approbation, and who moved slowly along the path of duty with no higher an aim, perhaps, than merely to escape the punishment of the unfaithful servant. Can it be imagined that such an one will receive so great a measure of the divine approbation as he who is entirely devoted to the service of God, and whose ardent desire is, that whether present or absent he

may be approved of him? The happiness of the latter individual will not be the result of an arbitrary appointment, it will arise from his possessing a character perfected by faith and holy obedience. The complacency of the Most High will for ever rest on such an individual; for he approves in his creatures what bears a resemblance to himself.

To attain a perfect likeness to the image of God is the grand object after which every christian ought to aspire, not merely because it will be followed by consummate felicity, but because it is the will of God that all his people should possess it. The apostle Paul evidently felt the influence of this consideration when he said:—"I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high-calling of God in Christ Jesus." Such a sentiment as this cannot be adopted, nor such a resolution formed from selfish motives; it proceeds from a higher and nobler principle. For there must be a supreme love to the object itself experienced before the happiness resulting from it can be enjoyed. In pursuing that object, there is, on account of its exalted nature, scope for unbounded ambition; and the development of that passion in this holy enterprise is, perhaps, the only way in which it can be exhibited so as to have a beneficial influence upon the character. When men engage in a competition for worldly distinction a mul-

titude of conflicting emotions agitate their minds, and feelings of the most unhallowed nature are sometimes excited ; and it not unfrequently happens, that he whose superior endowments have enabled him to obtain the distinction, becomes the object of envy and the most cruel persecution. Not so, however, in the christian contest. In it the loftiest ambition may be exercised without exciting in the breast any unholy feelings towards those who have made a nearer approximation to the object desired, and who, consequently, will receive more distinguished honour. And the more elevated the aim is, and the more vigorously it is pursued, the celestial influence requisite for such exertion destroys the operation of evil passions, and strengthens the principles which constitute the very essence of resemblance to Christ.

When God by his Spirit converts the soul, he restores the capacity for spiritual improvement which had been destroyed ; and he gives a proper direction and an irresistible impulse to the energies by which the man is enabled to advance in the interminable career of improvement which lies before him. Being the subject of a radical change, he has clearer and more enlarged conceptions of moral excellence as exhibited in the work of Christ ; and he is impelled forward, with a growing ardour, to the full attainment of it. When the truth is at first believed, the outlines only of the image of Christ are sketched upon his heart ; and though the prominent features of the character are visible, the picture is incomplete. Love

is not made perfect. But when he imbibes the spirit and follows the example of Christ, the faint outlines of the image which were drawn upon his heart stand more fully out, until a perfect likeness of the original appears upon the soul. That, however, cannot be fully realized in the present world ; but while the desire of it exists in the mind and constantly increases, a character is formed which will be the object of divine complacency. And what object is nobler or more worthy of our most ardent aspirations ?

It is readily admitted, that the object which is pursued, and the influence, in virtue of which the character is formed, are alike the gift of God ; but it ought to be recollected that the operations of the Spirit upon the heart are carried on in such a way as to leave the mind entirely free. The soul is not drawn along the path of holiness by means of an extraneous power which it feels inclined to resist, but is unable, neither does it follow holiness simply as a means of obtaining a greater good ; it desires it for its own sake as the greatest good which it can possibly enjoy ; and, possessing the capacity of obtaining a greater measure of it, the person cannot rest satisfied with what he has already acquired. He presses forward ; and the more complete his resemblance is, so much the higher will his enjoyment be. He will be hailed at the end of the course with the animating expression of approbation :—" Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."



Fifthly, Their works of charity performed from a regard to the authority of Christ will be publicly acknowledged at the last day ; and rewards proportioned to the nature and number of these works will be conferred upon them.

The christian philanthropist who, from proper motives, soothes the sorrows of the distressed, who freely gives of his substance to relieve the wants of the poor, and who succours the fatherless and the widow, will be rewarded when Christ shall come again. The humblest offices of kindness and love performed to the people of Christ, because they are his, will not be forgotten. “ He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward ; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily, I say unto you, He shall in no wise lose his reward.”—“ When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours ; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind : and thou shalt be blessed ; for they cannot recompense thee : for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.”*

* Matthew x. 41—42 ; Luke xiv. 12—14.

No language, I should think, could more clearly express the sentiment than this : and the reward or recompense, whatever it may be, must be something which shall constitute a part, at least, of the happiness of heaven ; and the measure in which it shall be bestowed will determine the amount of happiness to which it gives rise.

To what other conclusion can the following passage lead ?—" And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness ; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." This exhortation, it will be observed, is founded upon the parable of the unjust steward. Our Saviour did not deliver that parable because he approved of the conduct of the steward, or wished his disciples, in every particular, to imitate his example. He wished them to do so in one particular only, and that is to manifest as much wisdom in making provision for their happiness in another world as he did in providing for his comfort in this. He, by an unrighteous action, made friends of those whose debts he in a great measure cancelled ; but the individuals who received the benefit of his procedure could not approve of the principle from which he acted. Their friendship must have been based upon self-interest, and have endured as long only as he possessed the power of conferring favours. Our Saviour, therefore, cannot be understood to convey the sentiment, that riches, however unrighteously acquired, are sanctified when devoted to charitable objects ; and that the

extortioner is absolved from his iniquity when he employs his ill-gotten gain to relieve the wants of the poor. The jesuitical maxim, that the end sanctifies the means, is so completely subversive of every principle of true morality, than any interpretation founded upon it must be rejected.

“The mammon of unrighteousness” does not signify riches acquired by unjust means, it is a peculiar mode of expression used respecting riches generally, because they often fail to answer the expectation of those who possess them; and it is evidently opposed here to the true riches—“the treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.” Some suppose the language is designed to inculcate the sentiment, that those who possess riches should make to themselves friends of the poor by supplying their wants; that, when they themselves leave this world, those who have been the objects of their charity may receive them into everlasting habitations. This sentiment, however plausible it may appear, is alike opposed to the statements of scripture and to facts. It assumes, that all the indigent whose necessities are relieved by the bounty of others go to heaven when they die. This, however, is an assumption which, it is to be feared, the greatest possible exercise of christian charity will not permit us to make. But though they all, or even the greater number of them were received at death into the celestial habitations, what power could they have to open the gates

of these mansions for the reception of the disembodied spirits of their benefactors? Or, what influence could they possess to procure their admission? Those of them who have been the subjects of saving grace may, in heaven, recognize their benefactors and gratefully reflect on their kindness towards them in this world; but that is a very different thing from their acting as mediators, in any way so as to effect their entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Nor is it more in accordance with the spirit of the language to suppose, that angels are the persons intended. Doubtless it is a part of the employment of angelic spirits who minister to the heirs of salvation, to conduct their disembodied souls to the celestial glory immediately after death; but in performing this last office of kindness they sustain the character of servants only, and act in obedience to the commands of the Great Supreme. If the angels are at all acquainted with the doings of men, they must contemplate, with unmingled satisfaction, the kind and disinterested actions by which the distresses of the indigent are alleviated; but it is questionable whether it can be said these actions secure their friendship; and if they do, it is still more questionable whether it would be available to those whose actions had secured their friendship, in obtaining for them an introduction into that holy place where there is fullness of joy and pleasures for ever more.

Who then are the persons spoken of? I conceive



the language—and it is not the only instance of such a mode of phraseology to be found in the writings of the evangelist Luke—to be applicable to the Lord Jesus Christ. Taking this to be its meaning, it follows that, when his people who possess abundant riches consecrate them to holy purposes; when they, from love to him and a regard to his authority, bestow them to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, to relieve the oppressed, they, in so doing, secure his approbation. And when he comes to judge the world, he will say unto them :—“ Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world ; for I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in : naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee ? or thirsty, and gave thee drink ? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in ? or naked, and clothed thee ? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee ? And the King shall answer and say unto them, verily, I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

All this is in perfect harmony with what is said in other parts of scripture respecting our Lord Jesus Christ preparing everlasting habitations for his people, and of his receiving them into these habitations when

they leave this world. "In my Father's house are many mansions : If it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also." But though mansions are prepared for them all, some shall reach them and "be saved so as by fire," whilst others shall obtain possession of them more triumphantly—"An entrance shall be ministered unto them abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." The unostentatious deeds of the devoted christian who daily visits the abodes of the poor, the helpless, and the dying, to supply their wants and soothe their sorrows, may be but little known in this world, or may, perhaps, be altogether unnoticed ; but they will be made known, to the honour of them who performed them, at the great day when the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light. And can it be conceived that such individuals as Howard and other illustrious benefactors of the human race will enjoy no more abundant reward, and experience no emotions of a higher order, than those of the niggardly, penurious christian, whose bowels of compassion could hardly be moved by any appeal to his charity and sympathies, however powerful ? If he who gives a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple to a follower of Jesus, shall in nowise lose his reward, how much more glorious will his reward be, whose property was consecrated to the highest ends, and whose life was

one continued act of beneficence, than that of the person who cared little about the cry of distress, and who seldom, by his bounty and kindness, made the widow's heart to sing for joy ?

Sixthly, Those who are instrumental in promoting the spiritual welfare of others will enjoy peculiar honours.

The prophet Daniel seems to refer to this subject when he says, "They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever." And the apostle Paul, when speaking of those whom he was the means of bringing to the knowledge of the truth, uses language which corroborates this statement :—"For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." When a person has spent almost the whole of his life in the service of satan, and is made a subject of saving grace upon his deathbed, his disembodied spirit is, through divine mercy, received into the heavenly kingdom; but not having been instrumental in promoting the spiritual good of his fellow-creatures, he cannot enjoy the reward which follows such services. Being removed from the earth immediately after his conversion, he has no opportunity of performing the duties which might be made the means of converting others. The thief who was crucified beside the Saviour departed in these circum-

stances. After he was suspended upon the cross, he joined with the multitude in mocking and insulting the Sufferer who was expiring at his side. But before the vital spark was extinguished, divine mercy was extended to him. His heart was penetrated by the love of God; and with sentiments of genuine contrition, he addressed the dying Redeemer:—"Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Nor was his prayer presented in vain; for his guilty fears were dissipated by the gracious answer:—"Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." But how different must his feelings have been from those of the apostle Paul when he entered the heavenly world! From that place he doubtless looked back with joy upon his past labours and sufferings; and how greatly was his happiness increased by seeing many around him there who were brought to the knowledge of Jesus by his instrumentality? And whilst they all ascribe their salvation to the Lamb that was slain, they will be so many gems in the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give him at the great day.

On the same principle, it is reasonable to conclude that the circumstances of those who die in infancy will be different from the circumstances of those who spend a long series of years in the service of Christ, and who through much tribulation enter the kingdom of heaven. The former, who bade a final adieu to this vale of tears ere they could actively glorify the Redeemer or had tasted the cup of human woe, are in-

finitely happier than we can conceive ; but the latter experience more elevated pleasure from seeing, in the presence of God, their spiritual children sharing with them the joys of immortality. The former shall, when Christ comes again, receive crowns of glory ; but they will not shine with such resplendent lustre as the crowns of those who have turned many to righteousness. Whilst the one class “ shall shine as the brightness of the firmament,” the other class shall shine “ as the stars for ever and ever.”

The future happiness of christians is thus connected with their present character and attainments, as an encouragement to them to run with patience the race which is set before them. This arrangement is calculated to have the happiest effect upon beings in a state of probation, inasmuch as it is a powerful motive to holy obedience, and is capable of bringing into vigorous exercise all the virtues of the christian character. We cannot conceive of a principle more equitable than that upon which it is formed, because works alone can indicate the state of a man's mind, and develope the ruling passion of his soul. From its nature, however, it is a principle on which the divine Being alone can proceed with safety in fixing the destinies of men. He, by the glance of his all-seeing eye, can penetrate the hidden springs of action which lie concealed from human observation ; and can fully bring out to view the moral qualities of every deed. He could do so without a formal investigation of

men's works; but he will publicly scrutinize them to show to the universe the justice of his administration and the rectitude of his whole procedure.

Nor is that arrangement in any way opposed, in its spirit or tendency, to the doctrine of salvation by grace. For, when God bestows a reward upon his people, it is not a meritorious compensation for their labours, nor anything to which they have a legal claim; it is a superadded gift, exhibited as an encouragement to activity and conferred as a mark of his approbation. And those who receive the greatest reward will most deeply feel their eternal obligations to divine mercy and redeeming love; and they will be loudest in the song of praise which shall resound for ever in the heavenly temple. With sentiments of adoring gratitude and the profoundest humility they will say, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen." All the redeemed will trace their salvation to one common source; and like so many stars irradiated by the sun, they will, each in his appropriate orbit and with different degrees of lustre, revolve round the great centre through an eternal duration.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE PREPARATIVES REQUISITE TO THE ENJOYMENT OF THE HAPPINESS OF THE FUTURE STATE.

THOSE who have considered the subject with any measure of attention, will scarcely need to be reminded, that the pleasures and pursuits of the heavenly state, however pure and elevated, cannot be enjoyed by men who are under the uncontrolled influence of evil passions. There is nothing in it suited to their nature ; and their principles and habits and feelings are such, that they could have no intercourse with beings who are perfectly holy.

This painful and humiliating fact renders it indispensable, that they should undergo a radical change of heart. A partial one which might rectify the grosser parts of the conduct, and some of the more erroneous sentiments of the mind, would not cure the evil ; nor could it qualify the subject of it for the exercises in which redeemed men shall engage in the next stage of their existence. The individual must be quickened to a new life ; his lost capacity for spiritual improvement must be restored ; and as soon as it is restored, the soul exhibits an upward tendency ; and it constantly aspires after complete resemblance to the character of God himself. From that moment

the process of preparation for the enjoyment of future felicity begins ; and as the principle of spiritual life gains strength, the individual grows in fitness for the society and employments of the heavenly state. The elements of that life are infused into the soul by the Holy Spirit when he opens the mind to receive the truth, and it must be fostered and brought to maturity by the same Almighty Agent.

This, however, is but a very general statement of the subject. It will be requisite, therefore, to illustrate it somewhat more fully ; for the change of which I have been speaking is but the germ of the principles and feelings and habits which constitute the christian character.

First, The first and most important of these, is *love to God*.

The influence of that holy principle is felt immediately after the truth is believed ; and it may be defined to be, a supreme regard for him and a holy admiration of the excellencies of his character. It is not a selfish principle produced by the experience of the goodness which he has manifested in an endless variety of ways to his creatures, it is an emotion which springs from the contemplation of his attributes ; and although it may, in some circumstances, and to a certain extent, be modified by the experience of his goodness, it does not depend upon his goodness alone for its existence. That could not give rise to an emotion so pure as it is felt to be ; an emo-

tion in virtue of which the gifts are considered to be the minor things, and which makes the individual who feels it, value them chiefly as they indicate the dispositions and gracious designs of the Giver. It is in a great measure through them, indeed, that our knowledge of him is obtained ; and however valuable the gifts may be in themselves, and however well they may be fitted to bring happiness to those on whom they are conferred, supreme love to the Giver must be felt before they can be properly appreciated, or the pleasure enjoyed which they are fitted to yield. It is therefore, of necessity, disinterested in its nature ; and it terminates upon him as the only object worthy of supreme regard—as the fountain of all good.

That was the great, the predominating passion in the mind of man while he remained in the state in which he was created. It constituted the principle of the divine life in his soul ; it was the main-spring of his obedience and the chief element of his happiness. While he was governed by it and felt its benign influence, his mind naturally tended towards God as the source of all his enjoyment, and he had kindred feelings with other and higher orders of beings in whose nature it subsisted in perfection.

That principle, however, was destroyed when he committed the first act of transgression, and one which gave a contrary tendency to all the affections and desires of the soul occupied its place. The change which took place in the state of his mind, and which

is indicated by the phrase “ spiritual death,” did not consist in the destruction of any of his powers ; it consisted in giving them a wrong direction, and in imparting to them an impulse in that direction which no human agency could counteract. When that was done all the emotions resulting from their proper exercise were completely destroyed ; and though his faculties as an intelligent being were unimpaired—except in as far as prejudice and a body weakened by the effects of sin may be supposed to impair them—he became unfit for spiritual exercises and indisposed to all the pursuits from which he formerly derived his enjoyment. The principle of spiritual life was extinguished ; love to God resigned its control over the operations and desires of his mind ; and he became a depraved, miserable being. He then shunned the presence of his Maker ; he could not approach him with confidence ; and he felt in his heart the ranklings of an enmity which, though it had not then developed itself in all its forms, prevented the delightful intercourse with God which he previously enjoyed.

That was not the result of a penal infliction singly—for though he had been permitted to remain in the place where he spent the days of his innocence and held uninterrupted converse with his Maker, the state of his mind would have been the same—it was the necessary result of his own voluntary act ; a result which must have been felt and manifested in any locality, and in any circumstances in which he

could have been placed. He was, no doubt, the subject of a penal infliction for the sin which he committed ; but the utter annihilation of love to God which constituted the principle of spiritual life in his soul, and his consequent incapability of performing the functions of a spiritual life, and his total want of relish for spiritual employments, cannot be considered to form a part of that infliction. It was not the production of a divine, irresistible influence upon his mind, but it was not the less painful upon that account. For, whatever notion we may form of the efficient cause of the evil, the concurrent testimony of scripture and experience is, that the annihilated principle cannot be revived but by the operation of Almighty power. How can it be so, since enmity has taken possession of its place ? That principle, we know, cannot destroy itself and produce one essentially different in its nature. We might as well suppose, that the fields of ice in the polar regions are capable of bringing forth the delicious fruits and fragrant flowers which grow in southern climates, under the influence of a mild and genial sky.

Now, what would heaven be to a soul destitute of that love ? It would be a place of misery. The society of sinless beings would be intolerable to it ; spiritual exercises would be burdensome in the extreme ; and the unveiled presence of the Holy One would be a source of exquisite torment. These would be so many restraints upon its inclinations, and afford no gratification to the unsanctified passions which

continued to rage and burn within. All the external objects to which it could turn would mock its desires, and it would find nothing adapted to its tastes and habits. It would feel itself in an element altogether unsuited to its nature. This effect, strange though it may appear to some, is not the result of an arbitrary appointment, it is the result of a general law which seems to operate through every order of sentient beings. Even the irrational animals instinctively choose an element suited to their nature, and exhibit indications of uneasiness and pain when taken out of the one adapted to their constitution ; so much so, indeed, that death in many cases, and in a very short time, follows a change in their circumstances.

But the same thing is apparent among the different tribes to which the Creator has assigned the same element. Those whose physical organization and modes of living are similar, invariably seek to associate ; and they shun those whose nature and habits are dissimilar to their own. Besides, all the facts which come within the range of our observation and experience in human society seem to confirm the same truth. The rude, untutored savage prefers the society and pursuits of the tribe to which he belongs, to the comforts and enjoyments of civilized life among a race of strangers in a foreign land ; and he feels more pleasure in his brutal, sanguinary pastimes, than in the more refined gratifications which wealth affords, or in the finest intellectual employments. Now, why should we expect it to be otherwise in the case under

consideration ? The habits of fishes and birds, of the lion and the lamb, the savage and the sage, are not more dissimilar than are the views, the sentiments, and the desires of unrenewed men, and those of the holy beings who dwell in the presence of God. And sooner would the savage, without previous training, at once and for ever, quit his habits and hut, and find his pleasure in the society of men engaged in pursuing the most abstruse speculations of mental and physical science ; sooner would the monarch of the desert throw aside the fierceness of his nature, and abandon the wild, solitary haunts where he roams at large in pursuit of his prey, and harmlessly mingle amongst the flock to eat the grass of the field ; sooner, indeed, would the inhabitants of the deep leave their native element, and exhibit indications of enjoyment upon the dry land or in the aerial regions, than would an unrenewed man find enjoyment in the glory and pursuits of the upper world. They are unsuited to his nature ; and before existence could be tolerable to him there, the whole framework of its society would require to be changed. Other principles would require to be implanted in the minds of its inhabitants, or at least, those which at present regulate their feelings and their intercourse would require to be eradicated ; and the Great Eternal would require to shroud his glory in the blackness of darkness, and withdraw from it every visible token of his presence. But if all this were done it would be heaven no more ; it would no longer be the land of

of love ; it would be bereft of everything which renders it desirable to sinless beings. Yet nothing short of this could render it an abode congenial to the nature and habits of unholy men.

How vain, then, must be the desires and hopes of those who, without love to God, without being renewed in the spirit of their minds, expect to enter heaven when they leave this world ! Yet by how many are these desires and hopes cherished ! They are based upon ignorance and delusion ; for unregenerated men have the elements of perdition within themselves, and in whatever locality in the universe they may be placed, when wholly abandoned to the influence of their depraved passions, they would be their own tormentors. They would endure the gnawing of the worm that shall never die, and the burning of the fire that shall never be quenched.

The implantation of love to God in the soul is indispensable. A man cannot be happy without it in whatever circumstances he may be placed. And if it is generated in his mind at all, it must be so in this world. The production of it by the instrumentality of the word and the agency of the Spirit constitutes the new birth ; and without this spiritual regeneration, it is declared upon the highest authority, that no one is fit for the kingdom of heaven. " Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old ? Can he enter

the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Till this change takes place he is incapable of performing the duties or enjoying the pleasures of religion even in this world. He has no relish for them. How then could he relish the pleasures of heaven? The happiness which a Christian enjoys upon earth is similar in its nature to that which is enjoyed in heaven. It differs only in degree. The pure satisfaction arising from communion with God, the pleasures connected with the holy longings after a perfect resemblance to the Saviour's image, and the sacred joy produced by contemplating the glories of the divine character, are foretastes of heaven; and the soul who feels them has but to be freed from the encumbrances and imperfections of mortality, and it will naturally wing its way to that region as the place most congenial to its nature; as the place where alone its desires can be fully gratified. And the blessedness which it would enjoy there would be but an increase of the felicity which it tasted in this world, a full draught of the perennial spring of which it but sipped here

below. Its previous habits and feelings would qualify it for living and acting in that higher sphere of existence, and make it feel itself perfectly at home amidst its splendours and its pleasures.

Secondly, The mortification of the corrupt principles and desires of our nature, is also requisite.

The habit or principle by which this is effected is one of the highest utility, and is productive of the happiest effects upon the character. Without it the supremacy of evil principles in the soul is undisputed and undisturbed, and their hold upon the heart constantly waxes stronger and stronger. This habit is necessary not only on account of the grosser and more violent passions of our nature, but also on account of the undue desire of earthly things, and the various corrupt affections which exert an influence upon the most virtuous of men. "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life," are naturally inherent in the human heart, and they constitute *the body of death*, which those who are under the influence of divine grace carry along with them, while they are in this imperfect state. These desires are not mere accidental qualities exhibited by some portion of the human race in particular circumstances; they are common to all the descendants of Adam; they are developed in every grade of society, and in every possible condition in which man can be placed. Such a hold have they, indeed, that they seem to be interwoven with the very texture of the

soul ; and frequently, when they seem to be eradicated or their influence destroyed, they appear in other forms, and with an augmented vigour. All the functions of our moral nature are vitiated by them ; and the soul, whose operations they are permitted to guide, without the control of a higher principle, is, by them, drawn down to endless perdition. Having their seat in the innermost recesses of the human mind, they are like so many insidious, malignant, and powerful enemies in the camp whose secret machinations are productive of irreparable mischief.

The varied objects of sense amongst which christians live and move afford abundant means of gratification to them ; and these they continually pursue with untiring activity. From their very nature they would exist and effectually destroy the happiness of the beings in whom they resided, though there were no objects within their reach on which they could terminate. But when almost all the objects of sensation, with which we are daily and hourly coming in contact, are fitted to bring them into operation, the evil arising from their existence is greatly increased. How is it possible, indeed, that passions so strong and imperious as pride and covetousness and ambition, with all the train of fleshly appetites, can lie dormant in the bosom, when objects suited to their nature, possessed, too, of all the charms and fascinations in which the prince of this world can invest them, are perpetually passing before them in review and soliciting their attention ? They are ever awake.

and their influence is ever felt. Not only are their demands put forth amid the amusements, the enjoyments, and the pursuits of life; and at seasons when the soul is not directly conversant with spiritual things; they are heard amid the solemnities of the sanctuary, and they pursue the most heavenly-minded saint to the retirement of the closet. In that hallowed place, where he endeavours to exclude external things from his mind, and to make as near an approach to God as possible, they perturb his soul; they mar his meditations, and prevent him from holding uninterrupted intercourse with the upper world. In no circumstances, and at no time, is any one exempt from such intrusions as these; although there, doubtless, are occasions when their influence is less felt than on others. They are still present. To presume, therefore, upon their dormancy or weakness is foolish in the extreme; for it frequently happens, when those who imagine themselves strong in the possession of higher principles presumptuously venture to place themselves in circumstances of temptation, that they are unable to resist the force of those depraved passions which they feel still to exist, and still to be unsubdued.

The nature of the evil principles which are, in scripture, denominated "the old man," remains unchanged, and there is reason to think that their strength is equally great after the soul is converted as it was before, and that it will continue so, till the soul is set free from the body. The change which

takes place in conversion consists in the introduction of antagonist principles which keep under restraint, although they neither destroy nor weaken, the old ones to which they are opposed. The strength of these antagonist principles is capable of being increased to an indefinite extent, and in proportion as they acquire vigour is their influence felt. The unholy affections of the mind are kept under control by them in the same way as a captive-tyrant is by the vigilance and superior power of the conquerors into whose hands he has fallen ; but if the control is relaxed, they immediately exhibit their wonted vigour, and break forth as violently as before.

Such instances happen not only at the earlier stages of the christian life, but frequently after great advances have been made in the path of holiness. The progress, then, which is made in the work of sanctification does not consist in the weakening or the destroying of the carnal affections of our corrupt nature, it consists in strengthening the principles of holiness, and bringing them into more constant and lively operation. If it consisted in the former of these processes, a protracted earthly existence might witness their utter annihilation, and the attainment of absolute perfection on this side the grave. The time might come when it would cease to be a duty, because it would be unnecessary—to watch against temptation ; when the exhortation to mortify the deeds of the body would not only be useless but absurd, and when a complete relief would be experienced from the internal struggle.

of opposing principles. None of these things, however, have either been observed or experienced. On the contrary, those who have sojourned longest in this imperfect state find that there is really, and to as great an extent, at the close of their lives as there was when they at first set their faces heavenward, "another law in their members warring against the law of their mind, and bringing them into captivity to the law of sin which is in their members." Holiness, then, if it flourish at all in the soul, must do so in the midst of many refrigeratory influences. The noxious weeds which strike amongst its roots and contaminate the soil in which it is planted cannot be eradicated; and before it can be completely free from their influence it must be removed to a more genial soil, and to an atmosphere better suited to its nature.

Such being the case, it is evident that the principle of holiness possesses strength only in as far as it has the ascendancy over the evil propensities of our nature. Both cannot exert an equal degree of influence over the mind. Either the one or the other must have the supremacy. Now, since the strength of these evil propensities remains unimpaired to the last, the character can be perfected only by the invigorating of the principles of holiness. And one of the best means of increasing its vigour, is to maintain a constant warfare against those propensities whose influence it is designed to neutralize and counteract.

This warfare, however, must be maintained not by coming necessarily into contact with the objects on which they terminate, and then by the force of superior principles to endeavour to resist their solicitations ; it must be maintained by endeavouring to live near to God, and to keep the mind constantly in contact with divine things. This seems to be the notion which Paul wished to convey, when he says, " walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." The person who is absorbed by the concerns of eternity, who has a strong impression upon his mind of the value of the soul, and who regards its welfare as the highest object which can engage his attention is less likely to be affected by them than those who are not so constantly nor so intimately conversant with heavenly things. He occupies an eminence where the influence of the present world is comparatively little felt, and on which, by his proximity to the land of holiness and love, the powers of the old man cannot come so fully into play. From that elevated position he sees things as they are, and he feels more powerfully the influence of celestial objects than if he were living in the vale below. There he can, in a measure at least, trample the world under his feet ; and though, from the superiority of his spiritual discernment, he understands more fully and feels more keenly the plague of his own heart, temptation has not its wonted influence over him. The spirituality of his mind operates as a defence against it.

Were the habit of which I am speaking cherished as it ought to be, and regarded as a preparative for the enjoyment of heaven, the gratification, even in the smallest degree, of the unholy affections of our nature would be felt to be destructive of happiness. This of itself is a motive sufficiently strong to influence all to the practice of it ; and, were there no ulterior and higher object in view, it would be productive of immense advantage even in this life.

The declaration of scripture accords with the experience of those whose desires and conduct are regulated by it—"If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." It is true, this affirmation relates chiefly to the future happiness and misery which are the necessary consequences of the conduct pursued and the character formed in this world ; but it is equally true when viewed as descriptive of the present circumstances of men. The gratification of the unsanctified desires of the heart is not productive of satisfaction, nor followed by reflections which can with propriety be termed delightful. Those who live in the vortex of the pleasures of sin are the subjects of perpetual disquietude, and seek in vain, in their unhallowed pursuits, for anything which can soothe the restlessness of their spirits, or hush to silence the voice within which perpetually disturbs them by reiterating truths which they try, but without effect, to banish from their minds. Of happiness they know *nothing* but the name. They are dead while they live.

The gratification of these desires is similar in every case. They are found to be as baneful in the experience of those who are generally influenced by higher principles, as in the experience of those who yield themselves entirely to their control. Yielding in a single instance not only gives rise to self-accusations and pangs of the bitterest remorse, it blunts the holy feelings of the soul, obscures its view of the divine glory, and deprives it of the comfortable sense of the divine favour which it formerly enjoyed. Its happiness is marred, and it cannot be restored but by a fresh application, in the exercise of faith and repentance, to the blood of Jesus. That alone can remove its guilt, and bring it near to God, the source of all its happiness.

Besides, it is requisite that those who possess the hope of future blessedness in the heavenly state should maintain the honour and sacredness of their character. They are "sons of God," as well as "kings and priests," and as such ought to "abstain from fleshly lusts." To serve these lusts ill comports with the dignity of the state in which christians are placed. It is degrading in the extreme, and is altogether unworthy of those who expect to be raised to the possession of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. The relationship they sustain to the divine Redeemer, and to all holy intelligences who dwell on high, ought to make them spurn away the impure objects which are sought after as the only good, by those who are the slaves of their

passions, and whose desires prompt them to seek nothing better than what the earth affords. Such individuals "are of the earth, earthy;" and are content, therefore, to grovel among the debasing pleasures of sin, "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." They put forth no effort to mortify these desires, because they are total strangers to the ennobling sentiments inspired by the gospel of Christ, and have no correct conceptions of the joys of immortality. But how deplorably inconsistent to see the sons of God, those who are born from above and are heirs of glory, following such an example! If the important truth were always present to their minds and felt as it ought to be, that God is their Father, that heaven is the place of their future abode, that angels and redeemed men are the beings in whose society they shall live for ever; they would assert the sacredness of their character and the dignity of their state, by shrinking away from every sinful gratification, and constantly aspiring after objects suited to their nature. They would consider the mortification of the corrupt principles and desires of their nature to be, not merely a duty imposed upon them by an authority which they ought neither to question nor disobey, they would regard it as necessary to the maintenance of their honour; and they would carry on, with greater vigour and a steadier purpose, the warfare against them.

The indulgence of these affections indicates a want of relish for the pure and spiritual enjoyments springing from the contemplation of the divine character,

and from a life of faith upon the Son of God. For they, surely, who have tasted the pleasures of religion, and have obtained an antepast of the felicity of heaven, have no need to repair for enjoyment to the vain delights and delusive pleasures of the world ! They have within themselves a well of living water springing up into everlasting life ; and they are raised above the necessity of going in quest of other streams at which to quench their thirst. The very highest enjoyments of an earthly nature are immeasurably beneath those which arise from a sense of pardoned guilt, the possession of the divine favour and the hope of immortality ; and they who experience the rational and substantial pleasure springing from these sources are independent of the pleasures pursued by unrenewed men. Would the voluptuary, after he had sated his appetite on the choicest luxuries, relish the husks of swine ? If he did, yet would his taste be vastly more in accordance with all our notions of propriety than that of those who after having tasted the joys of God's salvation, desire again the polluted and debasing delights of time. That joy, indeed, is so great and so satisfying that it is no sacrifice to relinquish the pleasures of sin. They can be parted with without giving up the smallest degree of genuine happiness. But when the mortification of the carnal affections of our nature is regarded as a necessary preparative for the full enjoyment of the happiness of the future state, as well as productive of great present advantage, no language can describe the guilt and folly of those who,

without restraint, " fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind," and are " carried captive by Satan at his pleasure."

Thirdly, Communion with God is another excellent preparative for the enjoyment of the felicity of the heavenly state.

Communion with God is a comprehensive phrase, and indicates the effect of that habit in virtue of which the mind rejoices in a sense of the presence of God, in meditating upon his character and ways, and in giving expression to the holy desires which terminate upon him as the chief and only good. It is obvious that they who wish to divest themselves of all thoughts of God, and to whom the idea of his omniscience and omnipresence in connexion with his holiness and justice and power, is productive of nothing but uneasiness and apprehension, must be in a state of mind awfully perverted; and they could not be happy in any place where his unveiled presence is seen. Could they think of him only as a Being of infinite goodness, whose beneficence pervades all nature, and whose bounty is experienced by every order of sentient existence; could they think of him as One who is indifferent to what they call the petty delinquencies of men, and whose character is unstained by the indiscriminate exercise of mercy, they would have no wish to place themselves beyond the sphere of his presence and influence, because they would have no reason to dread his power or the effects of retri-

butive justice. But such is not the character of the Great Supreme. Whilst it is true that "his tender mercies are over all his works," it is also true that "he searcheth the hearts and trieth the reins of the children of men;" that "he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness;" and that "justice and judgment are the pillars of his throne." Such a Being as this alone can promote the good of the universe, and secure the confidence and love of all holy creatures.

The attributes, however, by which these effects are produced cannot be contemplated by those who are under the absolute control of unsanctified principles and desires, but with dread and alarm. They do not love the glorious Being to whom they belong; and in order that they may, without fear, cherish the sentiments and pursue the practices congenial to their nature, foolishly and impiously say, "depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Such men derive no comfort from the thought that he is ever present with them; they have no pleasure in meditating upon his character, and they carefully shun everything that brings them into contact with him. They would, were it possible, blot out his name and his remembrance from the universe. How then would they feel in heaven where he is more immediately present, and where every object bears the visible impress of his character? The brightness of his glory which is manifested there would have no charms to them. They would instinctively turn away

from the sight, and seek relief from its overpowering splendour in the shades of darkness and of death.

They are much mistaken who suppose, that a sight of his glory would of itself produce love to him, or make those who enjoy the sight feel pleasure in contemplating his character. These effects result from a different cause and must be produced in the present state. Is it reasonable to suppose, that those who take no delight in communion with God upon earth, should feel pleasure in communion with him in heaven? The thing is impossible. That, however, is one of the principal sources of the felicity of the saints in the future state. But before the happiness which it is fitted to yield can be fully enjoyed, supreme love to God must be implanted in the soul, and the habit of holding intercourse with him, formed and brought to maturity by constant exercise. However glorious and attractive his character may be, it must be loved before it can be meditated upon with pleasure. But when once the soul is, by divine influence, rightly disposed to that exercise it is productive of the purest and most elevated enjoyment. It cannot see the essence in which these perfections inhere, but they are—if the expression may be allowed—rendered visible and constantly pressed upon the attention in a variety of ways and in a variety of forms: so that the devout mind may everywhere find objects to call forth its thoughts to the Great Eternal. It has not to throw aside the garments of mortality and take its flight to the third heavens to enjoy the

high pleasure of holding intercourse with its Maker ; it may enjoy that pleasure, to a certain extent, and by different means, in this world. It knows that he fills immensity ; that there is no locality in the universe where he is not present ; and that the works of creation and redemption are so many varied manifestations of his character, and so many means by which he may hold intercourse with him.

His works are great and marvellous, and they are sought out of all them that take pleasure therein. Not only do his people take pleasure in meditating upon them, they derive immense spiritual advantage from the exercise. Creation throughout its illimitable extent, adumbrates the perfections of God, and gives forth intimations respecting his existence and attributes, so distinct and unequivocal as to make a deep impression upon their minds. These impressive intimations do not proceed alone from the great, the stupendous, and the sublime ; they may be read in the varied loveliness of the garden or the landscape, in the formation of organized existence, and in the final causes of all the arrangements of the economy of nature. The sacred writers, by the references which they have made to these objects, and the purposes to which they have applied them, have rendered the contemplation of them both pleasing and profitable. They are connected in the scriptures, in a variety of ways, with the name of God ; and, in virtue of the associating principle, they form a medium through which the most delightful communion with

him is enjoyed. To what part of creation can the contemplative christian turn, or what one of all "the things that are made" can he minutely examine without perceiving indications of his power and his goodness and his presiding agency? The earth, the air, and the water are full of him; and in all the varied aspects in which they can be viewed, they exhibit such indications as can hardly fail to make any one see, wherever he is, that he is surrounded by the visible tokens of the presence of the Great Supreme.

But communion with God, in the highest sense of the phrase, is enjoyed by means of the Word. It is there that he has made the most glorious development of his character and exhibited all the riches of his grace; it is there that he has unfolded his purposes of mercy to a fallen world and given expression to the love which was in his mind from eternity; it is there that the "exceeding great and precious promises" are recorded and the precepts which are the songs of his people in the house of their pilgrimage; it is there that the charter of their best and highest privileges is to be found; and there that the moral relations of the different parts of the universe to each other and to the Creator are made known. It is the very purpose of such a record to bring men directly into contact with their Maker; to make them see as he sees, and think as he thinks, and feel as he feels. It is to make them of one mind with himself respecting all the interesting and important subjects of which *it treats*; and to make them participate in the happi-

ness which he enjoys. "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you that your joy may be full. This is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." This "fellowship" is the highest to which man can be introduced, and there is no one who has been renewed in the spirit of his mind who has not a relish, more or less strong, for the hallowed enjoyment to which it gives rise.

This means of intercourse with "the Father of spirits" is always within their reach. They may be, and often are, so situated that they cannot contemplate the wonders of nature, or derive the benefit which such an exercise is fitted to impart; but this precious record is at all times available for the purpose, and admits the devout and holy soul into "the secret of the Most High." Though they feel that, by nature, they are aliens and outcasts, they feel, at the same time, that they are restored to his favour and friendship by faith in Jesus Christ, and that it is through the mediation of that glorious person they have access to God and are permitted to enjoy fellowship with him. Sustaining, as he does, the cha-

racter of "the God of salvation," he dissipates all their guilty fears, imparts to them the tokens and pledges of his love, and looks down upon them with an eye of paternal affection. This, upon the other hand, encourages them to look up to him, and, with a holy and humble confidence, to call him their Father and their Friend. And who can adequately describe the pleasure they feel when he lifts "the light of his countenance" upon them, when he gives them the continued assurance of his regard, and when his Spirit witnesses with their spirits that they are the children of God. It is the purest and most exquisite that can be experienced upon earth; it is the highest and holiest of which an intelligent creature is susceptible in this imperfect state. And what is heaven itself but the full enjoyment of this communion, in circumstances in which there will be nothing to interrupt it; nothing to check the full flow of divine love into the soul; nothing to remove the sense of the divine favour which every sinless creature possesses; nothing to withdraw the affections and desires from the great Being on whom they terminate; nothing, in a word, to destroy the harmony of feeling which is the very life and soul of all pleasurable intercourse. This is what is enjoyed in the world on high; it is what constitutes the very perfection of blessedness.

Now, it is abundantly evident, that a taste for it must be created before it can yield enjoyment; and *that* the disposition or habit which fits the soul for it

must, like all other habits, be perfected by exercise. It is not like a mere instinct which is put forth in perfection at once, without previous tuition or exercise, and is incapable of no farther improvement; it is a disposition which, though it has to contend against many counteracting influences, gradually acquires the force of a habit, and is capable of improvement to an indefinite extent. And the more it is exercised upon earth, and the stronger it becomes, the subject of it will, in proportion, be qualified for the heavenly state. They in whose minds it is not formed must be entire strangers to true happiness, strangers to a class of feelings the most delightful that can well be imagined; and they must, while destitute of it, remain in a state of seclusion from the source of all good.

The formation of that habit, in the soul of a sinful creature, is the most valuable blessing of which it is susceptible. It brings it near to the Creator, and fits it for living, in the full exercise of its renewed powers, in his immediate presence. But it is in this world that the formation of it must be effected, and it is here that it must be nurtured in the first stages of its being. It springs from love to God, and can have no existence apart from that heaven-born principle. And what would heaven be to those who are without it? It would be nothing else than a place of splendid misery; a place, the glories of which would be more intolerable than the gloom and the darkness of everlasting night. O, what folly is it, then, to imagine that heaven will be a place of happiness to those who

have no relish for communion with God upon earth ! That which imparts the highest claim to it, and constitutes its brightest glory, is the unveiled presence of the Holy One ; and they who are strangers to the pleasure arising from intercourse with him here, could have no enjoyment in his immediate presence in the world above.

Fourthly, The contemplation of the heavenly state, may also be regarded as a necessary means of preparing the soul for its full enjoyment.

There are, perhaps, few things that afford a readier or more certain indication of the state of a person's mind respecting the great question of personal religion than the disposition he feels towards this exercise and the pleasure he has in it. It is a criterion which determines at once the general bent of his inclinations, the strength of his habits, and the nature of the objects from which he derives his enjoyment. If his portion be in heaven, all the desires of his soul will constantly tend towards it ; and it will form the subject of frequent and delightful contemplation until he be put in the full and everlasting possession of it. The vanities and pleasures of time may solicit his affections, and its pursuits, in some measure at least, engage his attention ; but the superior attractions of heaven with its society and its services give his mind an upward tendency, and fix it upon itself. There it finds objects suited to its nature ; objects *which*, from their worth, their number, their variety,

and their durability are fitted in every way to gratify its most enlarged desires.

That place, however, has no attractions to one who is unrenewed in the spirit of his mind. He has no pleasure in contemplating its glory, he is incapable of forming an adequate conception of the nature of its blessedness, and he never thinks of it but as a kind of asylum in which, perhaps, he may find refuge from the woes of time, and where he shall be no more exposed to the calamities and crosses which are the cause of so much misery in this world. The absence of these is the highest, the only felicity which he desires ; so that what constitutes the chief excellence and the greatest glory of heaven has no influence upon his mind, and does not give rise to those emotions which the contemplation of a place where perfect purity and perfect love universally prevail, is fitted to produce. The portion of such an one is upon the earth ; and where it is, there will his heart also be. His thoughts all tend towards it ; and he cleaves to the dust. The heaven where God and holiness are has no charms for him, and he has therefore no pleasure in making it the subject of contemplation.

If a person intended, from his own choice, to leave the land of his nativity and take up his residence, for the remaining part of his life, in a far distant country, and among a race of men whose feelings and language and habits are all different from his own, he would endeavour, if the means were within his reach, to acquire a knowledge of the country, of

the character, and pursuits of the people, as well as of their language and modes of living ; and he would commence a course of preparations to fit himself for their society. If he expected that the change would be productive of happiness his thoughts would naturally turn to the place. He would contemplate with delight its mountains and rivers, its diversified scenery and productions, and he would make himself acquainted with the sentiments and subjects which engage the attention of the inhabitants. All this would be requisite in order to his feeling himself at home in it ; in order to his being either comfortable or happy.

It is true, the knowledge and feelings and habits necessary to the full enjoyment of the happiness which the place is fitted to impart, might be acquired by a residence in it. The people are of the same species to which he himself belongs ; their physical, intellectual, and moral constitution are, in their most prominent features, similar to his own ; the same general laws which regulate the processes of nature in the land of his nativity prevail in that country, and the ultimate object of their pursuit is not materially different from that which he has in view. There is no insurmountable barrier to be broken down ; there is nothing to be done to make him enjoy their society, which skill and resolution and perseverance may not effect.

If, however, instead of removing to a different, *though* remote locality on the surface of the same globe,

he were to be transported to another sphere of being, where the system of nature is essentially different from that of the globe on which he dwelt; where the physical organization of the inhabitants and their modes of existence are in every respect unlike his own; where there are no means of supporting animal life; and where there is no object of nature that can afford him the least assistance in forming a medium through which to convey to the beings with whom he comes into contact a knowledge of his wants, his feelings, and desires; he would feel an overwhelming sense of loneliness, and would be miserable in the extreme, although the countenances of all around him were bright with joy, and the place decorated with the richest and rarest specimens of the Creator's work. A residence in it, however long, could not, by any possibility, effect such a change upon him as to make his existence there in any measure tolerable. Before it could be so, the whole frame-work of his constitution would require to be remodelled, and a knowledge of the history and laws of the place, as well as of the language and pursuits of the inhabitants, acquired. But if the requisite change were effected upon him before he was transported to it, and a history of the place put in his possession, clothed in language founded upon objects with which he was familiar, would he not frequently avail himself of the assistance which the book afforded to make himself acquainted with the place, and to cherish in his mind

feelings and desires in virtue of which he would feel perfectly at home there ?

This bears some resemblance to the case under consideration, and it shows the absolute necessity of a previous acquaintance with the heavenly state, the occupations and pursuits of the redeemed, and the sources from which they derive their enjoyment. We have the means of obtaining this, at least to a certain extent, in our own possession. Although eye hath not seen nor ear heard, and although no heart can conceive, nor language fully express, what heaven is, yet there are delineations of it contained in the scriptures adequate to create, in every devout and holy mind, strong desires after it. And these delineations, though they come inconceivably short of the reality, furnish matter for the most delightful contemplation, and are some of the choicest means by which the Holy Spirit makes the soul meet for the full enjoyment of it. How cheering are such descriptions as these :—“ And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God having the glory of God : and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal ; and it had a wall great and high. And the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And I saw no temple therein ; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, *neither* of the moon, to shine in it ; for the glory of

God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it. And the gates shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there.”—
“And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: and they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there, and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.”*

Now, what shall we think of those who, having this map of the heavenly land, this delineation of its varied glories in their possession, seldom cast their eyes upon it, or spend an hour in examining it! Is this like the conduct of those who expect to dwell in it for ever, and enjoy its blessedness? Is this like the spirit of those who are looking “for a better country, even an heavenly.”

As the heavenly world is not an object of sense,

* Rev. xxi. 10—12, 18, 22—25; xxii. 1—5.

as it is imperceptible to flesh and blood, the contemplation of it is an exercise which must be carried on through the medium of faith. The intimations of its existence, and the descriptions of its nature and its glory, are conveyed to us in the form of a testimony, and we can derive no pleasure nor advantage from thinking of it, except in as far as we believe the testimony. Faith is indispensable to heavenly contemplation. It is a kind of perspective through which the christian obtains some glimpses of glory, and sees "the King in his beauty and the land that is very far off."

Although dwelling in this lower world, he can, in thought at least, by the power of that divine principle, ascend the mount of contemplation, and like Moses, when placed upon the top of Pisgah, he can see all the land of promise lying before him in the distance; or, like John, when he was carried in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, he can gaze upon "the holy Jerusalem"—"the city of the living God"—till the most ardent desires and elevated affections are produced in his mind. In consequence of being encumbered with a load of mortality, he cannot climb far above the base of that mount. He cannot ascend above those parts of it over which mists and clouds occasionally hang; but the higher he rises, his vision becomes less obstructed, and the scenes below either recede from his view, or fail to absorb his thoughts so much as they formerly did. In that favourable position, he can bring every individual

object in the scene before him more particularly under review, and make it the subject of examination ; and by that means he becomes familiar with the upper world, and all the feelings and desires which fit him for the full enjoyment of it are strengthened. This is the great design of such contemplations, and when found to answer the end, they ought to be pursued as an important part of christian duty, and used as a means of increasing his acquaintance with objects and scenes amongst which he expects soon to be brought into immediate contact, and from which he knows he shall derive unmingled and eternal enjoyment.

This employment, as well from its nature as from the effect which it has upon the mind, is worthy of the highest exercise of all the powers of the soul. It cannot be profitably engaged in while the mind is encumbered and distracted by the cares and the business of the world. The spiritual advantage of which it is productive, when properly pursued, cannot be secured by feeble efforts made but with half the heart, and in circumstances unfavourable to their success. The person who would rise upon the wings of faith to contemplate the glories of heaven must endeavour to divest himself of the encumbrances arising from the business and the cares of time ; he must be familiar with retirement, and seek, in solitude, when removed as far as possible from the influence of present things, those visions of the celestial world which have so frequently cheered and refreshed

the people of God upon earth, and afforded the richest foretastes of heavenly blessedness. The oftener the exercise is engaged in, it will, by the divine blessing, become more easy and delightful ; it will greatly enliven and invigorate all the principles of grace in the heart, and impart a tone of holy spirituality to the feelings.

This is the state of mind in which a christian is most disposed to devotional exercises, and in which, it is likely, he will derive the most advantage from them ; it is the state of mind in which the influence of the world with its engagements and pursuits is least felt ; it is the state of mind in which heaven seems to be nearest, and in which he feels the strongest desire to depart and to inherit the glory which is now but the object of contemplation. How easy would the transition have been to the disciples from the mount of transfiguration to the heavenly state ! How easy would it have been for John in the Isle of Patmos, while, in vision, he was beholding the throne of God, and the multitudes of angels and redeemed men which were standing before it, and listening to the services in which they were engaged ! The more frequently one makes these scenes the subject of contemplation, and the more fully he realizes them, the stronger will be his aspirations after perfect holiness, and the higher his qualifications for the enjoyments of immortality.

CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE CONSOLATION WHICH THE PROSPECT OF THE
HAPPINESS OF THE FUTURE STATE IS FITTED TO
IMPART.

THE inheritance of christians consists of two parts. The one is the glorious possession reserved for them in heaven ; the other consists of the allotments of Providence in this life. These allotments, although they are the result of eternal love and unerring wisdom, are varied in their nature ; and are, in many instances, productive of severe suffering.

The heirs of glory, however, endure many evils in common with other men ; and they can often trace the connexion betwixt their sufferings and their own misconduct. But the sufferings to which I more particularly allude at present, are those in which this connexion cannot be discerned ; those that come directly from the hand of God. Far be it from me, however, to affirm that these are of an arbitrary nature, or that they are inflicted merely for the purpose of giving pain. They are the consequences of sin ; and however great and varied and protracted they may be, they bear no assignable proportion to the amount of suffering which it has merited. This consideration gives a bitterness to them which would

not otherwise attend them ; and it is fitted to produce, in the minds of all who endure them, feelings of the most painful kind.

We are not warranted, however, to consider all the events which are the cause of pain to the people of God to be of a punitive nature. Many of them are intended to prevent them from falling into sin, and are designed as a means of discipline to train them for the services and enjoyments of the future state. In cases of this nature, though their minds are not racked and tormented by self-accusations, their guilty consciences being set at rest by the blood of Jesus ; yet they cannot but feel that such sufferings are present evils. And whatever their nature and tendency may be, they cannot endure them with patience and equanimity, far less can they rejoice in them, without the influence of some counteracting or sustaining principle upon their minds. But as God intends nothing but good in all these dispensations, he has graciously provided the means of consolation ; and he sustains them under the troubles of life by the hope of immortality.

Now, although that hope neither neutralizes nor mitigates the evils which they endure, it sheds a cheering radiance over the gloom which envelopes the most painful dispensations, and imparts a buoyancy to the mind which prevents it from sinking in despondency and despair. It yields a firm support to it amid all the uncertainties and apparent contin-

gencies of life, and bears them triumphantly along till they obtain possession of the heavenly inheritance.

Its sustaining power, however, is modified in every case by the estimate which they form of its object, the measure of their faith in the testimony which relates to it, and the degree of clearness with which they apprehend it. A single doubt respecting the reality of its existence, a misconception of its nature, or an uncertainty about their title to it, destroys its sustaining influence to a painful extent ; and renders it inadequate to produce the salutary effects upon their minds which it would otherwise do. But when the celestial country is vividly seen by the eye of faith ; when its varied glories are minutely contemplated ; and when a foretaste of its life-giving fruits is obtained, hope rises to a well-founded confidence, and enables those who possess it to conclude " that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed." It inspires them with a fortitude which nothing can shake, and cheers them on amidst the gloom and darkness of this vale of tears. With such a hope they can welcome whatever events may take place, and contemplate with a holy equanimity all the developments of Providence. Though these developments should be of the most cheerless and portentous nature, they are taught to regard them as the expressions of eternal love, and that they are designed to promote their highest interests both here and hereafter.

But the influence of such a hope will, perhaps, be best seen by contemplating somewhat more particularly the circumstances in which they are placed, and the trials they endure in the present probationary state.

First, It is fitted to make them cheerfully submit to the appointment of Heaven respecting their station in society.

Without limiting the bestowment of spiritual blessings to that class exclusively, we are assured, upon the highest authority, that "God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him." The condition of his people from the beginning, in reference to worldly things, illustrates the nature of this declaration, and confirms its truth. They generally move in the lower walks of life, and, not unfrequently, feel the painful consequences of deep poverty. They are, in a great many instances, not only destitute of the comforts and conveniences which can be procured by wealth, they have to struggle on through life against difficulties and discouragements, and can hardly obtain, even by unremitting toil, what is requisite to supply the wants of nature, whilst many of them, like Lazarus, subsist upon the crumbs which fall from the rich man's table. There are cares and anxieties and sufferings arising from these circumstances to which those whose cup

is always full are entire strangers, and which none can fully understand but those who have felt them.

When they look around and see the most irreligious men in the enjoyment of affluence, and having all that heart could wish ; when they see the bounties of Providence showered down in profusion upon them, and the riches of the world, to a great extent, in their possession ; they sometimes feel disposed to question the kindness of God towards them, and to conclude that it is vain to serve him. Painful as they feel their condition to be, their forgetfulness is occasioned not so much, perhaps, by their poverty and the suffering consequent upon it, as by seeing others pampered with wealth and luxuriating amidst the greatest fullness. It was evidently this that made the Psalmist arraign the procedure of the Most High. Without attempting, in any degree, to disguise his feelings, he says, " I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They are not in trouble as other men ; neither are they plagued like other men. Their eyes stand out with fatness : they have more than heart could wish. Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world ; they increase in riches." As soon, however, as he, by divine illumination, saw what was reserved for them in the future state, his envious feelings were suppressed, and his misconceptions of the ways of God completely corrected. And it seems to have been with a heart swelling with gratitude for being placed in circumstances different from theirs, that he exclaimed,

“ Surely thou didst set them in slippery places ; thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment ! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh ; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.”

Without extending our views into the other world and contemplating the whole range of our existence, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to point out any considerations sufficiently powerful to produce in the minds of christians a cordial acquiescence in the arrangements of Providence, and an unwavering confidence in the rectitude of the Divine procedure towards them in this. There is no doubt that, in all his dispensations, God has a special reference to their welfare in the future state ; and if he sees that poverty, with its temporary evils, will have the most salutary effect upon them, and be the best means of fostering and strengthening the habits which will fit them for the joys of immortality, they have reason not only to submit with all humility to the appointment, they ought to rejoice in it as a proof of the strongest love. Such being the case, what cause have they to repine ? Or what motive can they possibly have for desiring a change in their circumstances ? Although the riches of the earth were laid at their feet ; although they were elevated to the very summit of human grandeur ; although thousands were perpetually ministering to them and pouring the language of adulation into their ears ; would they not, without a sigh

or a single feeling of regret, relinquish them all, if they were to be enjoyed at the expense of the felicities of the future state? And would they not consider any arrangement, in virtue of which all these would be secured, if it made no provision for their eternal welfare, as indicating a disposition towards them infinitely less benevolent than the one which, though it entails upon them privation and suffering here, leads to glory and honour hereafter.

But independent of this consideration, the prospect of the happiness which awaits them in the future state is more than sufficient to reconcile them to their lot. It exceeds their highest conception, and will fully satisfy every desire which they can possibly feel, even when their knowledge is enlarged by the visions of heaven, and their capabilities of enjoyment increased to an inconceivable degree. Nor need they cherish a doubt about its ultimate possession. It is secured to them by a bond which can never be nullified; and no circumstances can ever occur to deprive them of it. This cannot be affirmed of any earthly inheritance which they may have in expectation. A thousand fortuitous events may take place to blight their hopes and prevent their ultimate possession of it; or death may lay his hand upon them and take them away from it. In either case, what does their cherished expectation avail them? It neither sustains them in death nor is of the smallest benefit to them in the other world. It is not so, however, with those whose inheritance is in heaven. That inheritance

cannot be affected by any events which can possibly occur ; and they may anticipate it with a confidence which nothing can shake. And, oh ! what a delightful influence does the anticipation of it have upon the mind ! When they look, it may be, at their wretched dwellings, destitute of all that is fitted to minister to their present comfort, they look with unmingled satisfaction to the mansions prepared for them on high, furnished with every thing suited to their state and character as children of God ; when they look at the rags with which, it may be, they are covered, and in which they feel ashamed to appear among men, they think with joy of the robes of righteousness with which they shall be clothed, and by which they shall be qualified to appear in the court of the King of kings ; and when depressed by marking the feelings with which they are regarded by the rich and the great of this world, how does it cheer them to contemplate the society into which they shall be introduced, and the feelings which shall be cherished towards them by angels and all the inhabitants of the celestial kingdom ! With the anticipation of such an inheritance, it can scarcely, in truth, be said that they are poor.

But although they cannot appropriate to their special use, the world and the temporary comforts which it affords, they are warranted, in a peculiar sense, to regard it as their own ; and in virtue of that warrant they enjoy it with emotions of a purer and higher

order than do the greater number of those who hold it in actual possession.

“ *They* look abroad into the varied field
Of nature, and, though poor, perhaps, compar’d
With those whose mansions glitter in *their* sight,
Call the delightful scenery all *their* own.
Theirs are the mountains, and the valleys *theirs*,
And the resplendent rivers : *Theirs* t’ enjoy,
With a propriety that none can feel,
But who, with filial confidence inspired,
Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
And smiling say—‘ *Our* Father made them all.’
Are they not *theirs* by a peculiar right
And by an emphasis of interest *theirs*,
Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy,
Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind
With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love
That plann’d, and built, and still upholds, a world
So clothed with beauty for rebellious man ?”

The sentiment expressed in these inimitable lines, is not a mere figment of poetic imagination ; it is based upon truth, and is in perfect harmony with that expressed by the apostle, when, addressing christians, he says, “ All things are yours ; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are yours ; and ye are Christ’s ; and Christ is God’s.” Now, if in addition to the present enjoyment arising from the possession, in the best and highest sense, of all this, they have the hope of an incorruptible inheritance in the heavens, what more do they need ?

What more can they possibly desire? Is not the hope itself, independent of all its delightful accompaniments, fitted to reconcile them to their condition, and make them look without a single envious feeling at the wealth, the possessions, the grandeur, and the honours of those whom Providence has placed above them in the scale of society?

Secondly, It is fitted to sustain them under the losses and disappointments which they suffer.

The instability and uncertainty of all earthly things are not matters of mere speculation; they are painful realities, and are universally felt to be so. In that case, losses and disappointments must be matters of frequent occurrence in the history of every individual. And there are none who have advanced far in the journey of life who have not experienced, in a variety of ways, the evils arising from these sources. The greatest prudence and sagacity in the arrangement of their affairs afford no security against them, and they are reckoned, perhaps, among the most painful circumstances which chequer the lot of men in this world. The same measure of fortitude that will raise them above bodily pain or the violent disruption of the ties of relationship is sometimes found utterly unable to support them under the loss of their property or the disappointment of some fondly cherished hope. This is evident from the frenzy and madness and despair exhibited by many of the hapless individuals who ex-

perience these evils. Is it not a painful fact, that numbers who, in the arrangements of an all-wise, though often mysterious Providence, are suddenly and unexpectedly reduced from opulence to beggary, either become the subjects of a mental derangement, or vainly seek relief in the land of forgetfulness by a self-inflicted death? Indeed, it is almost impossible to conceive of the state of perturbation and tumult into which the mind must be thrown, before reason resigns the control over its operations; or the still more fearful conflict of passion which drives its victim to lay violent hands upon himself. Yet such occurrences are neither few nor far between. They happen almost every day, and the records of them show but too clearly the estimate which, in many cases, is formed of these evils, and what they are felt to be when the mind is not influenced by the principles of religion.

Far, infinitely far, be it from me to insinuate that losses and disappointments, however great or unexpected, are in themselves calculated to plunge men into a state in which they cannot be considered to be accountable agents, or that they, in the smallest degree, palliate the guilt of an act, the most rash and reckless, perhaps, that it is possible for a human being to perpetrate; still it must, I think, be admitted that they affect the human mind in a peculiar way, and bring into operation a class of feelings of the most distressing nature. Now, apart altogether from the testimony of experience, it is reasonable to

conclude that christians experience these feelings as well as other men when they are bereft of their substance, and see hopes, from the realization of which they anticipated a large amount of happiness, blasted in a moment. These circumstances bring along with them a deep sense of their short-sightedness and helplessness, and spread a gloom over their minds which it is almost impossible to dissipate. They cannot manifest a stoical indifference to such things—and who would consider it to be desirable that they should?—nay, their feelings are, perhaps, more deep and pungent, inasmuch as all the sensibilities of their nature are refined by the influence of religion. How is it, then, that they can contemplate with calmness, or, at least, without becoming a prey to sullenness and despair, the total wreck of their worldly affairs, and bear up under circumstances which overwhelm others in irremediable distress? It is by the possession of a hope full of immortality; a hope which brings along with it satisfying and enduring blessedness. Destitute of it, they are wretched whatever else they may possess; but with it they are happy, though all other things should be taken away. They can say, in the language of the prophet: “Although the fig-tree should not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stall: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, *I will joy in the God of my salvation.*” These ex-

pressions do not indicate insensibility to the adverse dispensations of divine Providence; they indicate a state of mind the very opposite—a calmness resulting from looking beyond present calamities and contemplating that world where there shall be no change, and nothing to give rise to one painful emotion.

We have a fine example of the effect of this hope in sustaining the mind under losses and disappointments in the case of Job. He occupied a station of eminence and honour; he had immense possessions, “and a very great household,” and “was the greatest of all the men of the east.” He seems to have enjoyed, also, in a very high degree, the comforts of domestic life, and to have been loved and revered by all around him. It seemed, indeed, from his circumstances, exceedingly improbable that he was an object against whom the shafts of adversity would be directed. But such was not the case. For the eminence on which he stood, instead of securing him from danger, seemed but to render him a more conspicuous object of attack. And when he was marked out as the victim of adversity, its shafts were directed with such fearful precision and effect as to leave no point untouched through which it was possible to inflict a wound. He was suddenly denuded of all that he possessed. His substance, his family, his reputation, and his health departed together, and he was left in a condition the most deplorable that can well be imagined. Yet was he not utterly overwhelmed. He bore the

change with a fortitude becoming a servant of the Most High. And whilst he bowed with deep submission to the will of God, as expressed in the mysterious arrangements of his Providence, he was upheld by the anticipation of a state beyond the grave, in which he would have a possession incomparably superior to that which he had lost, and where he would be surrounded with comforts, of which the rude hand of violence should deprive him no more.

When recounting his calamities, and, in the bitterness of his soul, deprecating the ruthless conduct of his friends, who proved to be but "miserable comforters"—he, in holy triumph, thus gave utterance to his hopes: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." This language is expressive of all he could desire, and of all he could possibly enjoy, even in the highest perfection of his redeemed state. And well, surely, might such an anticipation enable him to behold with equanimity the total destruction of his worldly estate, and the blighting of his fairest earthly prospects by the ministers of Providence. Now, who, let me ask, of all the human family have to lament losses equal to the losses which he sustained, or to experience disappointments equal to those which he experienced? If any such there be, yet would the

well-founded hope of the heavenly inheritance be a sweet solace, and be felt to be a stay on which they could securely repose when every thing else had given way.

The permanency and unchangeableness of that inheritance stand out in fine contrast with the fluctuating and perishing nature of all sublunary things. The epithets applied to it in scripture clearly show that it is beyond the influence of the causes which render every thing in the present world uncertain and insecure. When spoken of as a "substance," it is said to be "enduring"; when described as a "treasure," it is said that it "faileth not"; and when called an "inheritance," it is said that it "fadeth not away." These qualities enhance its value beyond all expression, and prove it to be durable as eternity itself. This, however, is true not merely respecting its simple existence, it is also true respecting its capability to impart undiminished satisfaction and blessedness to those who possess it. Its grandeur and glory will never pall upon the eye, nor will the contemplation of it fail to produce emotions of the most exquisite delight while the cycles of an endless duration revolve. But how different is it with all earthly things! The most valuable and fascinating of them are not only corruptible and liable to decay; they soon become incapable of imparting the same degree of pleasure which they imparted at first.

The proud proprietor of an estate, who, during the

period of his expectancy, pictured in his imagination the varied and abundant enjoyments he would ever have at command when he should enter upon the possession of it—is surprised ere long to find that the fields which he calls his own fail to yield him the satisfaction which he anticipated, and that the oftener he surveys them his pleasure becomes less. This painful effect is produced not by any change in the objects themselves, it is produced by a change in the state of his own mind. He has only learned what he would not before believe, that they are utterly incapable of imparting unmingled and lasting enjoyment. The possessions which he enjoys are still the same. The sun continues to shine upon them as brightly as ever, and they exhibit as much beauty and loveliness as before; but his own mind has undergone a change, and he sighs for something else to calm the restlessness of his passions and gratify his desires. But where is that something to be found? Not surely in the vale of mortality; for here all is mutable, evanescent, transitory. And though every thing below the sun had the stamp of immutability and eternity upon it; yet, while human nature remains as it is, the man who had no higher object in view would still remain unsatisfied and unblest.

The objects of the heavenly state, whilst they alone are changeless and abiding, are the only ones suited to the minds of men. When pursued with a holy ardour, they will not elude their grasp; nor, when

enjoyed, will they be found to come short of their most elevated expectations. And although their perceptions of moral beauty will be perpetually waxing clearer and their capabilities of enjoyment always increasing, yet will the progress of their minds never be such as to enable them fully to comprehend the objects which shall engage their attention, or to say that they "have found out the Almighty unto perfection." How delightful, then, is it, amid the vicissitudes of time to contemplate that world where every thing is permanent; where there will be no change—unless, indeed, perpetual improvement can be called change—and where disappointment is unknown! There, there will be no apprehensions entertained about the future, and no neutralization of felt enjoyment by the thought of its being taken away. That is precisely such a state of things as men desire, and the hope of dwelling for ever where it exists is well fitted to calm their spirits when they are troubled by losses and disappointments.

Thirdly, It is fitted to sustain them under the temptations of Satan.

Satan, the great enemy with which they have to contend, endeavours, in a variety of ways, to harass and distress them, and to divert their attention from the great object which they have in view. Hence it is that the christian life is compared to a warfare: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the

rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Although these evil spirits are under the control of the exalted Redeemer, the limited power which they possess is exerted in all the forms which malice can contrive to annoy the people of God, and counteract the influence of his Spirit upon their heart.

In speaking of the temptations of Satan, however, I wish to be understood as having a more particular reference at present to the efforts which he makes to shake the faith of christians in the gospel testimony, to generate fears in their minds respecting their state, and to give rise to blasphemous thoughts against their God and Saviour. That he can do this is beyond all doubt. The experience of multitudes both in heaven and on earth fully confirms the fact. But in what way he does it we cannot explain. It is altogether incomprehensible by us. The danger, however, is not the less on that account; because the tendencies of our nature—and of these he cannot be ignorant—are so many instruments which he can turn against the soul itself. And well he knows how to make use of them. His influence upon the mind can only be known by its effects. He has, it is true, no direct access to the heart to know its feelings and desires and thoughts; but he is intimately acquainted with the tendencies of our depraved nature, and, perhaps, with our actions and the peculiar situation in which we are placed, and can exhibit external objects and circumstances in such a way as to deceive even

those who have the most extensive knowledge of his devices. But still, we are unable to comprehend how he makes use of these appliances to accomplish his purposes ; or how he can, apparently without them, suggest notions and give rise to thoughts which fill the mind with a horror which it frequently struggles in vain to banish away. All this, however, is experienced by christians every day.

Now, what can be more distressing to those who love the Saviour, than to be tempted to doubt the truth of the gospel testimony, after they have experienced its sanctifying power and the preciousness of its promises ? What can fill their minds with a deeper anguish than to be tempted to believe, notwithstanding all their previous experience of the peace and hope arising from a believing view of the cross of Christ, that they are not included in the number of the "ordained to eternal life" ; or, that they have committed the sin against "the Holy Ghost, which shall not be forgiven, neither in this world, neither in the world to come" ? What more distressing than to be tormented by the fear of falling a prey to their enemies, of sinking amidst the swellings of Jordan, and of failing to reach the heavenly Canaan ? Or, what more harassing than the impure and blasphemous thoughts which involuntarily arise in their minds, and which frequently exert such a commanding influence as to unfit them for meditating upon spiritual things, and for engaging, with the smallest degree of comfort, in the exercises of devotion ? These are

“the fiery darts” with which Satan sometimes inflicts the most fearful wounds, and which occasion the deepest mental agony in those at whom they are directed. Yet who among all those engaged in the christian warfare have not been assailed by him in some, if not in all of these ways, or can say that they are strangers to the distress to which such temptations give rise ?

Now, these, it is obvious, are evils which christians alone experience. None but those who “fight the good fight of faith,” and who endeavour by divine grace and in the divinely appointed way to “lay hold on eternal life,” can understand what they are.

It is necessary to remark, however, that it is not the hope of eternal glory which constitutes their security in these circumstances ; their security lies in a humble reliance on the mercy and power of the Saviour, and it is only in proportion to the simplicity and strength of that reliance that a well-founded hope of glory can be enjoyed. But though the vigorous exercise of faith be requisite as the means of present safety—and the records of christian experience furnish many instances of the exercise of strong faith, even when Satan with all his might endeavoured to raise the greatest doubts—the hope which rests upon the thing believed is not the less precious or influential as a means of comfort and support under such temptations. They cannot, indeed, without the exercise of faith, make use of the means of present defence which are within their reach ; and if these are

not resorted to and skilfully used, the hope of victory and the victor's reward can neither be rational nor well-founded. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day; having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance." Those who are thus armed may be assaulted, and assaulted too with all the fury of satanic power, but they will not be overcome. They may be cast down, but they will not be destroyed. Though they fall, they shall arise. And when engaged in the conflict, they are encouraged by the promises contained in the scriptures:—"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."—"To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." If ungodly men are strangers to the disquietude and distress necessarily arising from such temptations, they are also strangers to the happiness arising from the anticipation of such a reward. And who that reflects for a moment upon *the greatness of the reward*, would not cheerfully

endure the temptation, if he had the prospect of enjoying it. What though Satan annoy them at every step ; what though he allow them no respite ; what though he put forth all his energies and practise all his devices, the conflict will soon be over ! He will be bruised under their feet shortly. And, O how sweet is it to think of that happy world above, from which he is for ever excluded, and to which his influence does not extend ! There the redeemed shall enjoy unmolested the fruits of their victory, whilst he shall be shut up in the bottomless pit to come no more out. Such a prospect has a powerful influence upon their minds, and cannot fail to support them when assailed by their spiritual enemies.

Fourthly, It is fitted to sustain them amidst the weakness and pains which they suffer in the body.

The effects of sin have extended to the body as well as to the soul, and they are apparent in the irritations and derangements to which its various parts are constantly liable. These irritations and derangements are produced by causes perpetually in operation, in all countries, and in every variety of climate ; and the sufferings necessarily arising from them are great. The seeds of disease are sown in the body. It brings them into the world along with it, and when exposed to the influence of external circumstances, they spring up and bring forth the manifold weaknesses and pains under which the human race universally groans. No means have yet been discovered to eradicate them, or in any considerable de-

gree to check their growth. On the other hand, as society advances in civilization, and, what is commonly termed refinement, they seem to shoot up with greater rapidity and in a greater variety of shapes. The diseases which now invade the human frame are every day assuming new forms ; and notwithstanding the advancement which has been made in medical science, and the improvements made upon medical practice, yet do they prevail as widely as ever, and fill the habitations of men with sorrow and distress. Who that traces the footsteps of an epidemic or a pestilence is not overwhelmed at the contemplation of the sufferings to which it gives rise ? It is true these appalling forms of disease are comparatively rare, and appear only at intervals more or less wide ; but even in their absence, the amount of pain and affliction endured in consequence of the universal prevalence of disease, perhaps of a less frightful aspect, is mournfully great. None are exempt from them. None are strangers to the feelings which almost invariably accompany them.

Now, whatever be the design of God in sending them, there can be no doubt that, in themselves, they are real evils. They are not joyous but grievous, and are disagreeable in the extreme to flesh and blood. How much impatience and worldliness and impiety are brought to light by the infliction of bodily pain ! Those whose minds are not imbued by divine grace, and who are not in the habit of recognizing the hand of God in the events of life, *when visited by a painful and protracted disease are*

often "like a wild bull in a net." They are fretful and obstinate, and their proud hearts rise in rebellion against the Great Being whose hand is upon them. They are unable to pursue their wonted pleasures, and by constantly brooding over their sufferings, they become so irritable that they cannot enjoy the comforts they possess ; and services performed to them with the greatest tenderness and affection are either received in sullen silence or requited with a frown. Surely they must be miserable, indeed, who, when under the influence of disease, exhibit such a temper and spirit ! They are a burden to themselves, and a source of misery to all about them. If we were ignorant of the real cause of all suffering, we should, in all probability, conclude that such sufferings were unmerited. This would seem to be their own view of the case, for nothing short of such an impression could account for their feelings and the general state of their minds. But this is not the light in which christians view the subject. They consider all the diseases to which they are liable as the necessary consequences of sin ; and that, instead of fretting and complaining when they are attacked by them, they ought, with meekness, to submit to the chastisement, and be humbled in the very dust that such a thing is necessary.

The strong aversion to pain which seems to be inherent in our nature, makes men universally deprecate the diseases to which they are liable, and to use all the means within their reach to defend themselves from their attacks. Nor is the feeling or the con-

duct to which it prompts, in any degree opposed to the genius of christianity or the dictates of inspiration. Both lead us to cherish the belief that disease, in all its forms, is a calamity, and that it is not desirable for its own sake. There is nothing in it, indeed, which can render it so, nothing which can make us regard it as anything else than the bitter fruits of sin. This consideration, however, whilst it justifies the Most High in the infliction of suffering, and shows the utter groundlessness of all complaints arising from the conception of its being undeserved, is altogether incapable of sustaining the mind and keeping it tranquil, when the body is visibly sinking under the influence of some chronic malady, or racked and tortured by one more acute and painful. It is fitted rather to increase the evil, and to fill the mind with the most distressing emotions. But whatever notion is formed respecting the cause of it, all conclude that, in itself, it is a great calamity. In that case, since every attempt to remove disease from the earth has failed, it becomes a matter of the highest importance to ascertain whether or not it can be, in any measure, neutralized, and the mind sustained and cheered when the body is afflicted by it.

Various expedients have been resorted to by men for this purpose, but they all have failed. Of what use, for instance, is it to tell a man who is pining away in a consumption, or whose strength is prostrated by a fever, or who is agonized with some more painful malady, that he is suffering nothing more than *many others have suffered, and that such evils*

are the common lot of humanity? None whatever. It is a mere mockery of his miseries. For, though the whole human race were enduring similar evils, and enduring them even in more aggravated forms than his own had assumed, that would not and could not, by any possibility, lessen his sufferings, or afford the prospect of a more speedy termination to them. And if he had no greater consolation than what the knowledge of that fact imparted, with a heavy and desponding heart, he might say to those who reminded him of it, "Miserable comforters are all ye unto me."

However much metaphysicians may speculate about the power of such a fact to divert the attention of a person, and render him unconscious, in a measure at least, of his own sufferings, it has no permanent effect upon his mind. The violence of pain makes him quickly forget all others, and fix his thoughts upon himself alone. He may, in the intervals of suffering, think of those who are afflicted in a similar way, but it is only to lament their condition, and to grieve that such distress as he feels should be endured by any of his fellow-creatures. Nor have any other considerations, apart from those which are drawn from divine Revelation, been more efficacious. All have failed to impart comfort. All have failed to sustain the mind. Nothing, indeed, can do that but the prospect exhibited by the gospel of Christ.

There need not, I presume, be any question about *the* salutary influence of that prospect upon those *who* enjoy it. The happy experience of multitudes

of redeemed sinners, both in heaven and on earth, proves that it is amply sufficient to cheer the heart in the midst of pain and suffering, and to fill it with sacred joy when the body is undergoing the most exquisite sufferings. How many of those who have suffered martyrdom on account of their attachment to the Saviour and his holy religion have been so transported with the visions of immortality as to be almost, if not altogether, unconscious of pain, even when their persecutors were employing all the instruments of torture which their diabolical skill and malice could invent! To suppose that, in such cases, sensation was destroyed by a miraculous intervention is quite out of the question. The phenomenon can be accounted for, in the most satisfactory manner, without having recourse to such an unwarrantable supposition. Indeed, there is the strongest reason to conclude, from a number of circumstances, that their capabilities of suffering were as great when their bodies were stretched upon the rack, or subjected to the flames, or when lacerated and mutilated by other instruments of torture, as they were under any other circumstances. Had it been otherwise, it would have required no singular display of fortitude to encounter the rage and fury of persecutors, and the devotedness and steadfastness of the martyrs could not be regarded as an illustration of the sustaining power of christian faith and christian hope. Yet this seems to have been one of the great and important ends to be answered by the sufferings of the followers of Jesus *during the first ages of the gospel dispensation.*

But, although the point in question were even somewhat doubtful, still there are other circumstances which can be referred to in proof of the fact, that the prospect of a blessed immortality has such a powerful effect upon the mind as to make the most agonizing pain of comparatively easy endurance. Take, as an example, the following passage from the Memoirs of the late Dr. Payson :—" A friend, with whom he had been conversing on his extreme bodily sufferings and his high spiritual joys, remarked, ' I presume it is no longer incredible to you, if ever it was, that martyrs should rejoice and praise God in the flames and on the rack.' ' No,' he said, ' I can easily believe it. I have suffered twenty times ; yes, to speak within bounds, twenty times as much as I could in being burnt at the stake, while my joy in God so abounded, as to render my sufferings not only tolerable but welcome. *The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed.*' " This is not a solitary instance of the kind, it is one out of many ; and it illustrates as clearly as a thousand others could possibly do, the influence which the anticipation of heaven has upon the soul when the body is affected by disease. If, in these extreme cases, it produces such an effect, there can be no question, surely, about its capability of producing a similar one in ordinary cases when the sufferings are less severe and painful.

It does not follow, however, that, in these latter cases, the happiness enjoyed is always great in proportion as the pain endured is less. It is not unfrequently

the reverse of this. And the reason seems to be, that when the afflictions are comparatively light, mere human strength is often relied on for support; the mind is not so completely diverted from temporal things, and it has, consequently, a less clear conception of the reality, the importance, and nearness of "the things which are unseen and eternal." This consideration, viewed in connexion with the promise, "as thy day is, so shall thy strength be," explains how it is, that many christians experience such a limited measure of joy in the time of trouble. But their experience, surely, cannot with any propriety, be considered to give the slightest countenance to the notion, that the prospect of enjoying perfect, unending happiness in the future state, only in extraordinary instances, produces the delightful effects already mentioned; and that it is incapable of producing them in the experience of God's people generally. No; their experience, if it do not spring from some physical cause, only indicates the defectiveness of their principles and the obscurity of their views. For were the glorious object on which their hope terminates, made the subject of more frequent contemplation and more steadily kept in view, those who cherished it would rejoice in the midst of their troubles, and be absorbed in the anticipation of a state of existence in which uneasiness and pain shall never be felt. They would consider the sufferings arising from a diseased body, like all other afflictions endured in this vale of mortality, to be light and momentary. They are always felt to be so, when weigh-

ed in the balances of the sanctuary against the "exceeding great and eternal weight of glory," laid up for christians in the world above.

Fifthly, It is fitted to sustain them under the loss of christian friends by death.

There are, perhaps, few events in the order of Providence, that make a deeper impression upon the sensibilities of our nature, or give rise to more pungent anguish than the death of relatives and friends. Such an event touches us in the tenderest part, and excites in the soul a class of emotions which none can properly understand but those who have experienced them. But, alas! how few are strangers to them! How few are there who have not followed to the grave the remains of some who were the objects of their tenderest affection, and buried along with them the greater part of their earthly comfort!

In such a world as this, where death universally prevails, a large proportion of the suffering and misery endured must spring from this source. Scarce can you visit a family and glance at the events which have taken place during a short period of its history, but you must listen to the sad tale concerning some beloved relative whom death has violently torn away from them. And whilst they dwell with melancholy fondness on everything which brings to remembrance the departed object of their affection, their bosoms swell with the deepest emotion, and the flow of tears indicates but too clearly that there is a grief wringing their heart which language is inadequate fully to ex-

press. They feel a sense of desolateness which no earthly thing can possibly remove ; and in vain do they attempt, by any expedient, to divert their attention from the painful subject. It is ever present to their minds, and occupies their thoughts wherever they are and in whatever they are engaged. And, oh ! what a changed and cheerless aspect does the world present ! They move as formerly among living beings like themselves, and enjoy, perhaps, an average share of the other comforts allotted to humanity in this imperfect state ; but they are deprived of the presence of one whose society afforded them a pleasure, the purest, perhaps, enjoyed upon earth, and whose councils and sympathies and tender regards, soothed their sorrows, sweetened their cares, and was a means in the hand of a gracious Providence of smoothing the rugged path of life. The loss of the departed, indeed, is felt in a variety of ways every day ; and the painful feeling is kept alive in their minds by numberless associations.

Now, these feelings, painful though they are, spring from a principle in our nature which operates in a greater or less degree in every possible state in which men can be placed. The results of it are experienced by the votaries of every system of religion ; they are experienced by men in every stage of social improvement and in every country on the face of the earth. Their religious belief, it is true, and the sentiments they hold respecting a future state, in some measure regulate the feelings produced in their minds by the *death of their relatives and friends* ; but the instances

are comparatively few in which the affections of our nature are so completely destroyed as to make them contemplate with unmoved indifference the death of an affectionate or a beloved friend. And who would envy such a state of mind though it could be produced? Who would wish to have all the sensibilities of his heart so blunted and benumbed as to be incapable of receiving the feeblest impression from a stroke which occasions the most acute suffering to the generality of men. The heart that is incapable of grieving is incapable of rejoicing; so that those who would consider that state of mind desirable, in which they could view without emotion the total disruption of the closest and most endearing ties, would be altogether incapacitated for enjoying the pleasure arising from the interchange of sentiments and offices of kindness by beings of kindred minds. They would be unfit for society, and could have no sympathy with the joys and sorrows of other men. Such beings, however, are rarely, if ever to be met with. The social affections exist in every breast, and when they operate, the dissolution of the bonds of friendship by death or the breaking of the family circle, is felt to be an evil unspeakably great; an evil which frequently renders the survivors inconsolable.

It will not, I apprehend, be supposed that christians are less liable to that evil than other men are. No; they form similar connexions, they sustain similar relationships, and these connexions and relationships are as frequently broken up as are the ones formed and sustained by others. Christianity, though

it disarms death of its terrors, cannot avert the stroke, or place those under its benign influence beyond the reach of the physical evils which fall to the lot of other men. All genuine christian friendships, it is true, will survive the stroke of death and be perpetuated through eternity ; but still, the temporary separation which must inevitably take place plunges the survivors in deep distress. Their sorrows, however, are chastened by contemplating the state into which their departed friends have entered, and by cherishing the pleasing hope of meeting them again. " Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth ; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours : and their works do follow them." They are not lost. They still live. And with respect to them, all is well. And were it not that a sense of the loss sustained by those who are left overcomes, in a great measure, the influence of this consideration upon the mind, there would be no grief experienced on account of the departed ; there would rather be thanksgiving and praise for their deliverance from sin with its attendant evils, and for their introduction into a state of consummate felicity. The knowledge of their state, therefore, when it has to contend with such a powerful principle as that of selfishness—for the feeling, however natural, seems to have its origin in that principle—is inadequate to sustain them under the loss, or to impart the comfort which is found in every case to be needful.

How consoling to such persons is the language of *the Apostle Paul* :—" But I would not have you to be

ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God ; and the dead in Christ shall rise first : then we which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air : and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." This revelation gives them the assurance not simply of eternal life and glory in the future state ; it warrants them to cherish the pleasing anticipation of meeting their departed friends after death, and of enjoying, in their society, all the felicities of the heavenly world. Is not this fitted to moderate their sorrow ; to make them bow with peaceful resignation to the will of God in the removal of those who are taken away ; and calmly to wait the hour of their own release from their prison-house of clay. Every tie of this description which is disrupted by death, lessens their attachment to earth and fixes it more securely upon heaven ; so that what is felt to wound their heart and cause pungent grief, is graciously overruled for their good. *It makes them impressively to feel the vanity and uncertainty of every thing connected with this world ;*

it leads them to contemplate with a deep interest the realities of eternity ; whilst the hope they entertain enables them to bear with equanimity the temporary evil which is the cause of their sorrow.

Sixthly, It is fitted to cheer them in the hour of death. The termination of life is an event to which all look forward with feelings of awe. The most careless and indifferent cannot contemplate it with unconcern. It is the hour in which all visible connexion with this world is dissolved, and the state of the soul fixed for ever. A change like this, and one too of which we can have no previous experience, is repugnant to all the feelings of our nature. Men instinctively shrink away from it ; not so much, perhaps, from the love of life or the pain of death, as from what immediately follows it. They dread the thought of entering into an unseen and untried state where they shall meet the Great Eternal. Whatever, then, can remove that dread and impart peace and joy to the mind when the soul is about to quit the body, must be regarded as an invaluable blessing. It is what all men need. Without it no one can be safe. And all attempts which have been made by human means to produce such a state of mind, in these circumstances, have utterly failed.

The vague notions of another life entertained by some of the heathen, and their uncertain hope of happiness in that life, are unable to inspire them with solid peace in the prospect of death. They cannot remove the painful dubiety and the dark forebodings

which fill their minds when standing upon the verge of life. The simple belief of a future existence, even when based upon incontrovertible evidence, can afford no great degree of satisfaction, nor shed a cheering influence upon the mind, when it is unaccompanied by proper conceptions of the mode of that existence, and the circumstances connected with it. And this is, perhaps, all that the generality of the heathen know about the matter. They have no accurate notion of the state into which the soul passes immediately after death; they have no knowledge of the resurrection of the body; they have but very confused and inadequate conceptions of the general judgment, and are utterly ignorant of the glories and felicities of the place in which righteous men shall dwell through eternity. And, what is still worse, they cannot entirely divest themselves of the fears arising from conscious guilt. They are haunted by the painful thought that their personal virtues are not sufficiently great to entitle them to a place amongst the happy immortals, or that their sacrifices have not fully propitiated the deities whom they worship. With views so defective and erroneous, it is not surprising that they should tremble, hesitate, and despair, when about to step into the invisible world. They are incompetent to cheer and sustain their minds. What is there, for instance, in the doctrine of a metempsychosis to impart peace and joy? Extremely little, indeed. It does not direct them to a state of perfect, unending felicity, to be entered upon immediately after death, but to what

may be called a succession of states ; of the sufferings and enjoyments peculiar to each they can scarcely form a conception. It makes nothing clear, nothing certain. The hope of such an immortality as it proposes, does not prepare them for the solemn hour of decision ; it does not enable them to meet death with peace and confidence.

The boasted composure said to be enjoyed by some infidel philosophers does not indicate a state of mind greatly preferable to that of the trembling, ignorant heathen. And it will not, I am persuaded, be envied by those who have proper conceptions of the character of God, of their own sinfulness and responsibility, or be considered to be the result of principles which can be relied on in that hour of decision. Any thing bordering upon levity and indifference ill comports with the circumstances in which the soul is placed at that time, and can spring only from the absurd and fearful belief that there is no hereafter. And, oh ! what a cheerless prospect is that of utter annihilation ! There is nothing in it, surely, calculated to make any one either peaceful or indifferent. And although it would, doubtless, be preferable to a miserable existence throughout eternity, it cannot be contemplated by any intelligent being without emotions of horror. There is something opposed to all the feelings and affections of our nature in the thought of ceasing to exist ; in the thought of falling asleep in death to wake no more. It is true, there would, in that case, be no penal inflictions endured for the sins

committed in the body ; but neither would there be the pleasure arising from the exercise of the noble faculties which were but beginning to be unfolded in this world, and which, when perfected, are the means of exquisite enjoyment.

Indeed, there are few things fitted to cast a deeper gloom over the mind than witnessing the death of those who are imbued with the spirit of an infidel philosophy. Some of them, however tenaciously they adhered to their sentiments through life, have been unable to conceal the agony of their minds in death, when the scenes of an awful futurity began to burst upon their view. Their principles could not sustain them in the last conflict of nature. Others of them, though they have retained their sentiments to the last, have left the world in a way consistent, perhaps, with the principles and spirit of philosophy, but utterly at variance with all correct notions of the circumstances in which they were placed as creatures, and more particularly as sinners. Who, for instance, would envy the feelings of Hume, who spent the last hours of his life in frivolous games, and in amusing his friends around him with jests about Charon's boat ? Are such occupations as these suited to the dying hour of creatures about to quit the stage of life and take a long farewell of all who are dear to them ? Certainly not. Or, who would say that the feelings and views with which Bentham met death are much more enviable ? " It is recorded of him that, some time before his death, when his family believed he was near his last hour, he said to one of his dis-

ciples, who was watching over him, 'I feel that I am dying; our care must be to *minimize* the pain. Do not let any of the servants come into the room, and keep away the youths; it will be distressing to them, and they can be of no service. Yet I must not be alone; you will remain with me, and you alone; and then we shall have reduced the pain to the least possible amount.'” The very thought of such conduct towards his family, in such circumstances, is enough to freeze the very soul. Indeed, there is nothing in either of these cases to indicate that the minds of the individuals were entirely at ease, or that they died without some awful forebodings of a dark, unknown futurity. Yet to induce such a state of mind is the very utmost that philosophy can do for its votaries in the last hour of life.

But how different from all this is the state of a christian in these solemn circumstances. He is enabled, by the power of faith in the revelations of scripture, to look beyond the gloom of the grave, to descry the glorious realities of the world beyond it, and to contemplate with calmness the state on which he is about to enter. This—and it may, perhaps, be considered to be the lowest degree of comfort enjoyed by the generality of christians in the immediate prospect of death—is a blessing which nothing but christianity can confer. It is rational and satisfying, and flows from a source which shall never fail. But this feeling, which we call comfort, may be increased to the very highest degree of transport of which the soul is susceptible on this side the grave.

When faith and hope are strong, the emotion rises in proportion. It takes its character from the conception which is formed of the object on which faith and hope terminate, and the medium through which these objects are viewed. When they stand out in full perspective before the eye of faith and all dubiety respecting them is removed, "joy unspeakable and full of glory" arises in the mind. In some instances, indeed, the soul is so irradiated with heavenly light, and the visions of immortality are so clearly discerned, that the hope seems to be turned into full fruition while yet the spirit lingers in its house of clay. Now, although such delightful anticipations of "the glory which shall be revealed" are not always enjoyed by christians in the hour of death, the fact of their being often enjoyed abundantly proves that the hope, which those who die in the faith are warranted to cherish, is able to support them. And when they are enjoyed, the soul seems almost insensible to the struggles which, not unfrequently, accompany dissolution, and longs to ascend to that happy world, the glories of which shine so brightly upon it. All its guilty fears are for ever removed, and, with holy triumph, it exclaims, when the last enemy approaches, "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God who giveth me the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ."







